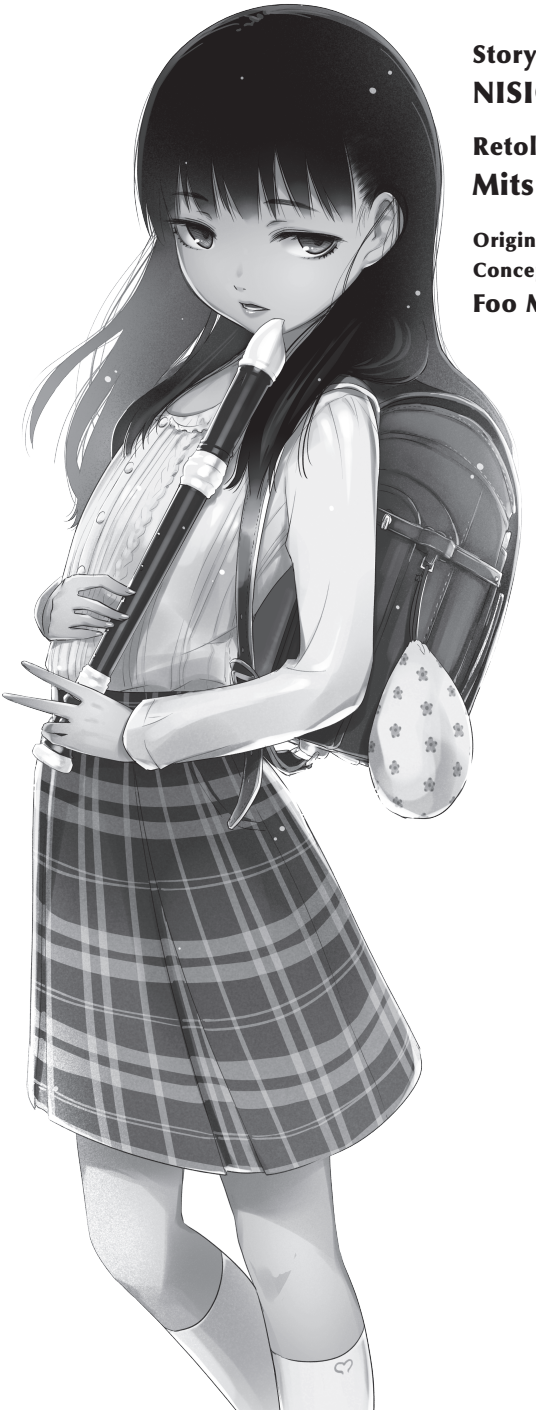
Story by NISIOISIN
Retold by Mitsuru Hattori
Imperfect Girl
1

Imperfect Girl



Story by
NISIOISIN

Retold by
Mitsuru Hattori

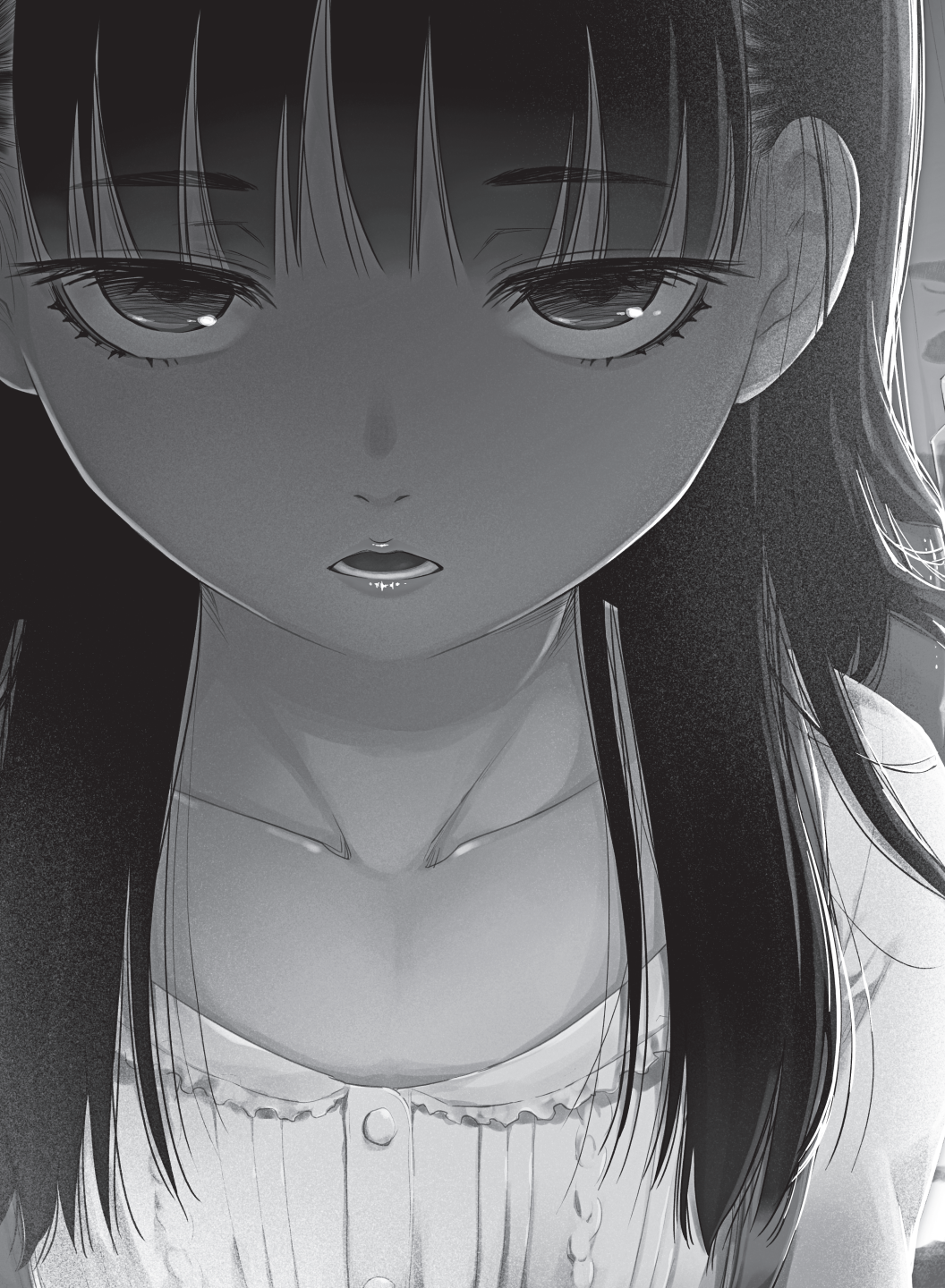
Original Character
Concept:
Foo Midori

1

This is not a tale.

カ〃
GACHAK
チャ
and an incident.
NOTEBOOK
This is an event,

I'll be leaving now.



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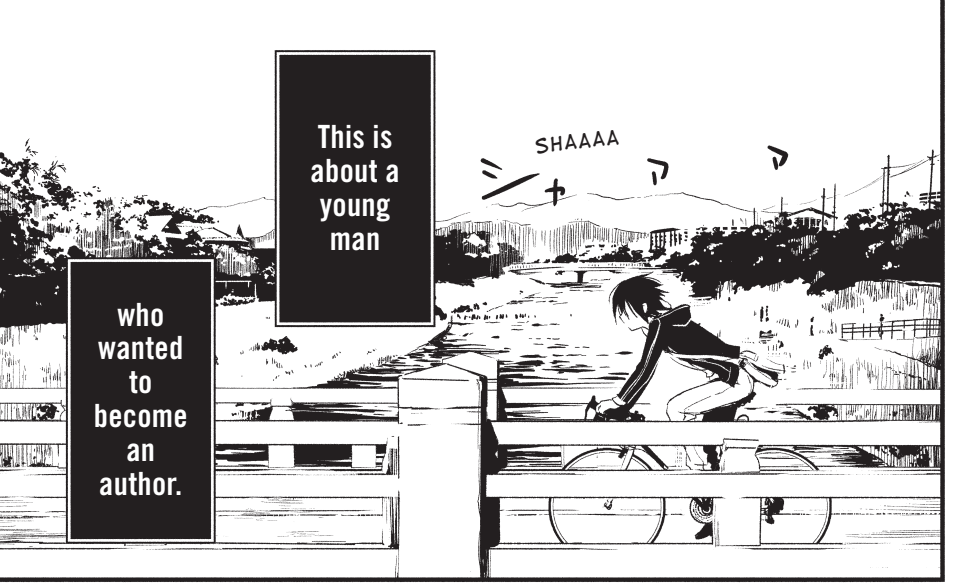
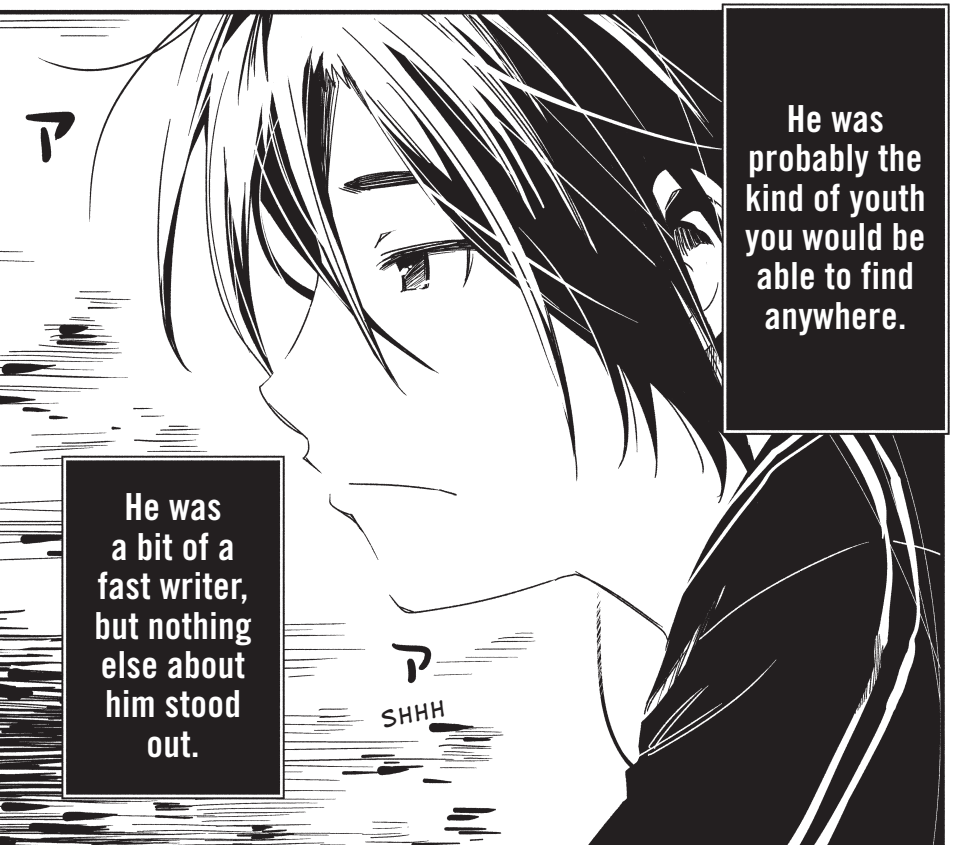
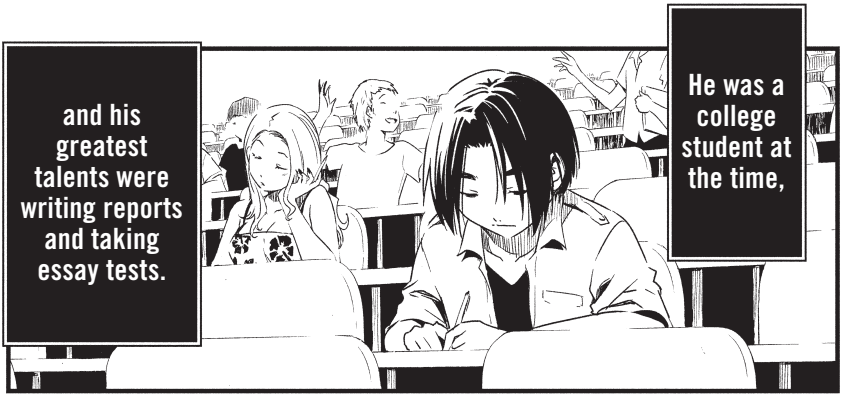
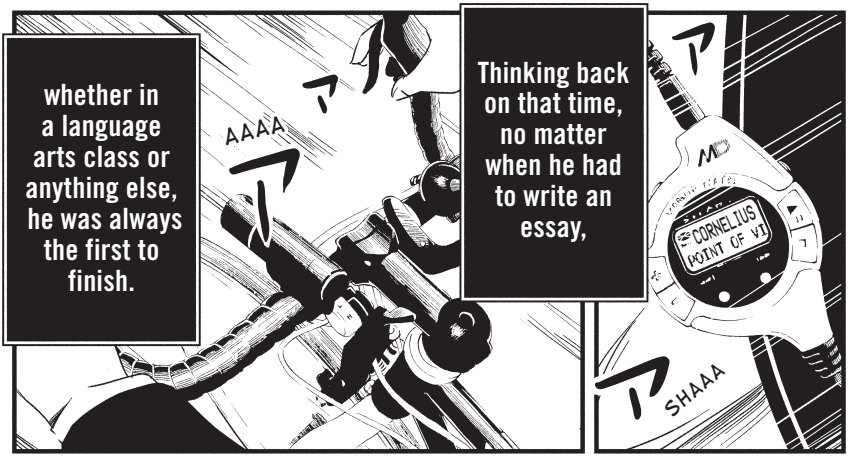
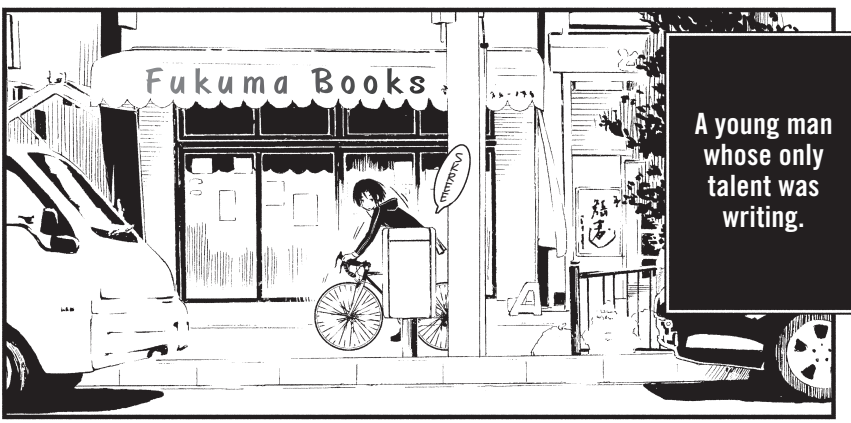

This is about a young man
who wanted to become an author.
SHAAAA

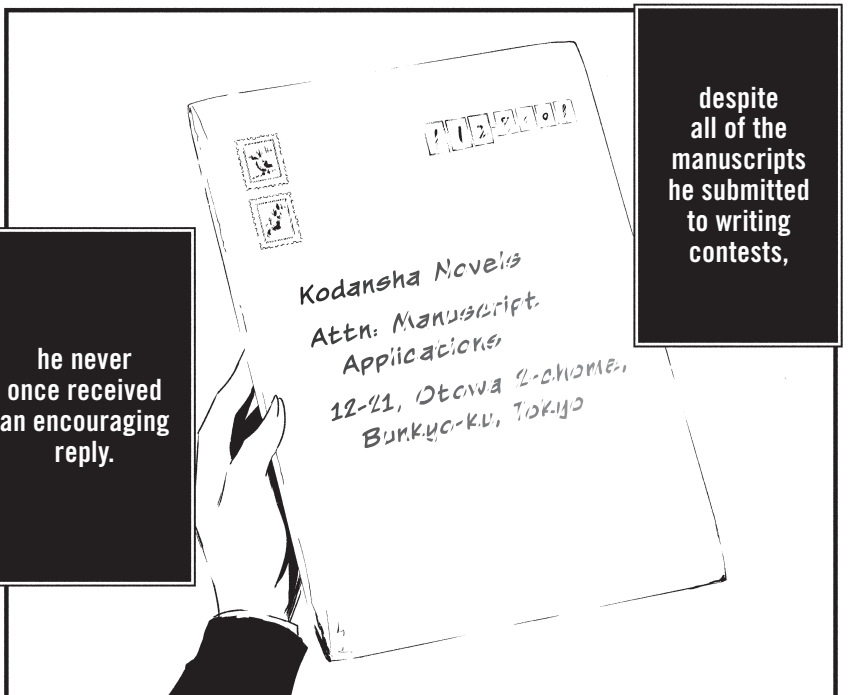

He was probably the kind of youth you would be able to find anywhere.
He was a bit of a fast writer, but nothing else about him stood out.
SHHH


He was a college student at the time,
and his greatest talents were writing reports and taking essay tests.


Thinking back on that time, no matter when he had to write an essay,
whether in a language arts class or anything else, he was always the first to finish.
AAAA
CORNELIUS
POINT OF VI
SHAAA


Fukuma Books
A young man whose only talent was writing.

And so,
RUSTLE
But at the same time, that isn't to say he was a talented novelist.


despite all of the manuscripts he submitted to writing contests,
Kodansha Novels
Attn: Manuscript Applications
12-21, Otowa 2-chome, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo
he never once received an encouraging reply.

He had already met with editors from multiple companies at that point,
but unfortunately, those meetings never bore fruit.
Maybe if he'd had better people skills,
he wouldn't have let those golden opportunities pass him by, but...

those editors were right to see me as "someone with no prospects."
SHMP
A New Novel that Shatters 10 Years of Silence!
WINNER OF THE NEWCOMER AWARD!!!
At the time, of course, I wondered why they didn't understand just how entertaining my work was.
Summer
VOICES FROM THE NEXT WORLD!
You know, those kinds of conceited thoughts.
But I can see now that my work lacked a lot of things.
TCH

They weren't novels by an author.
They were novels by an *aspiring* author.
SHAAAA
Even if I could somehow close my eyes and ignore that fact,
for some reason, at the end of the day,
I think those (attempts at) novels just didn't have any sparkle.
ア
ア

Okay then, you might ask me, what's the difference between an author and an aspiring author? Well, an author is

a creator of tales.

The way I see it, that's what separates the two.

An author creates tales.

But an aspiring author

LIES

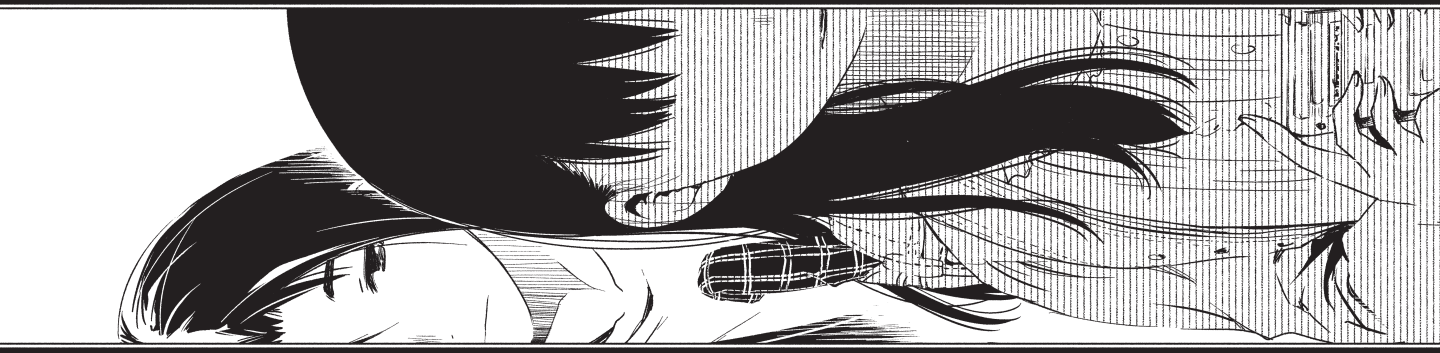
and nothing more.

At the time, I was just a liar.

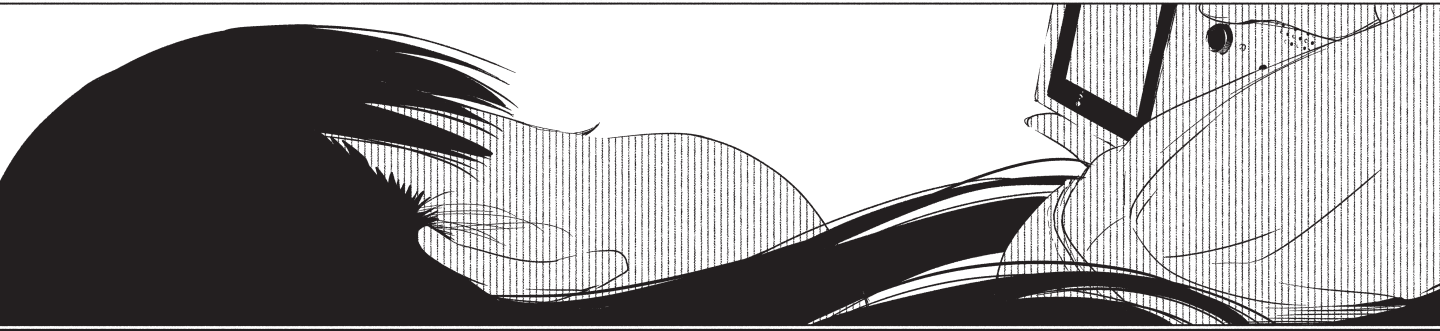
Just a yarn-spinning blowhard.

Which is why I think
were it not for that event taking place,
I honestly never would have amounted to anything.

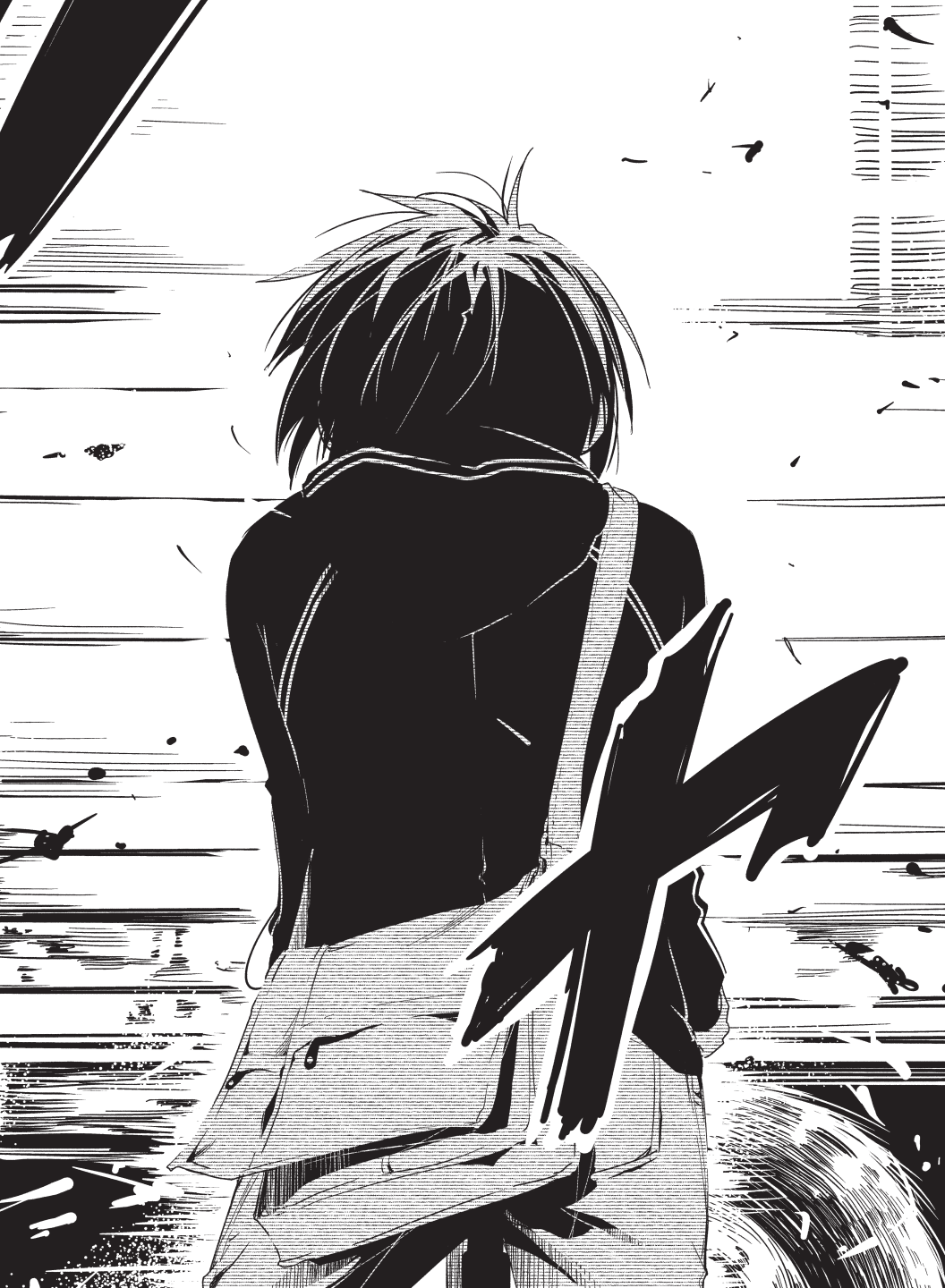
And that's why



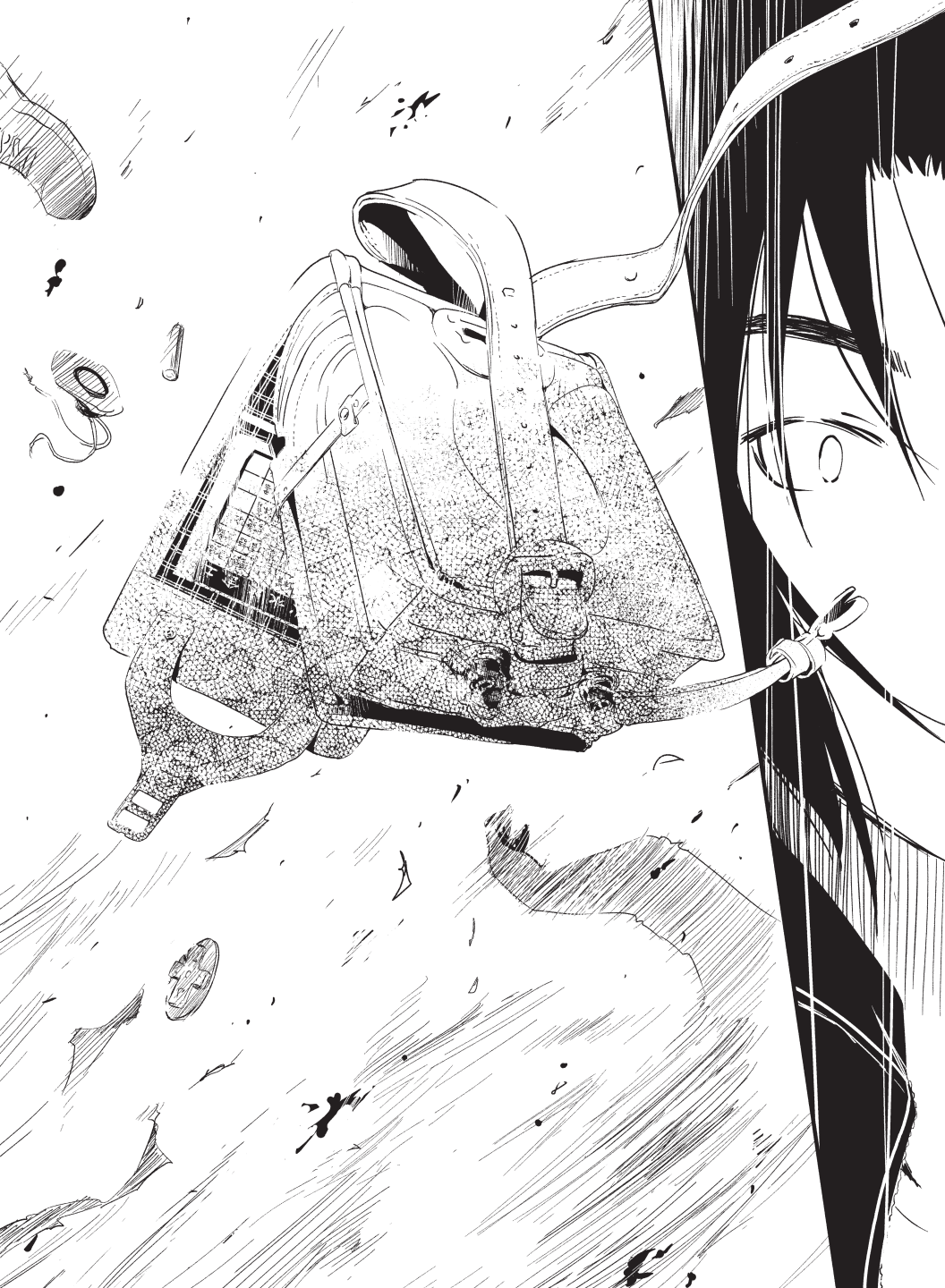
I think I need to thank her.



That child, that girl.

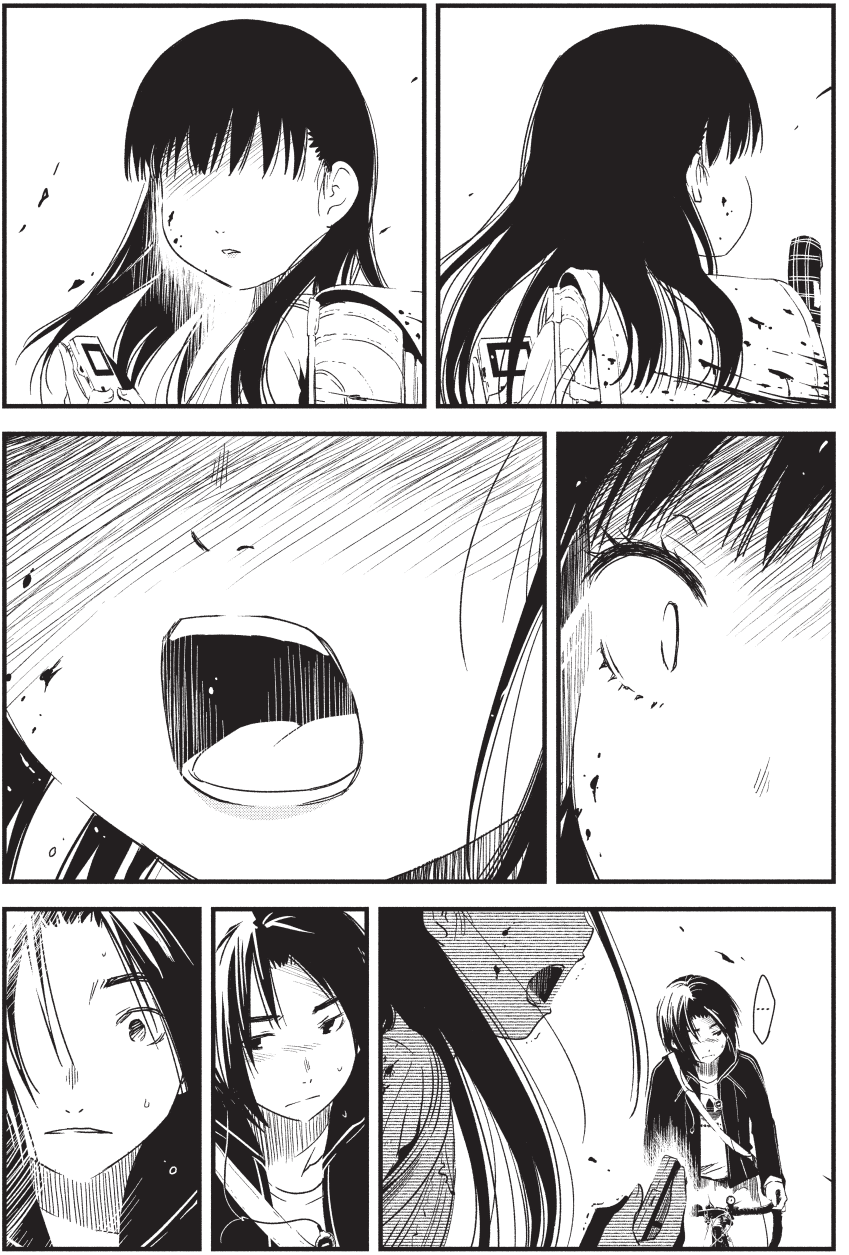


SGREEE



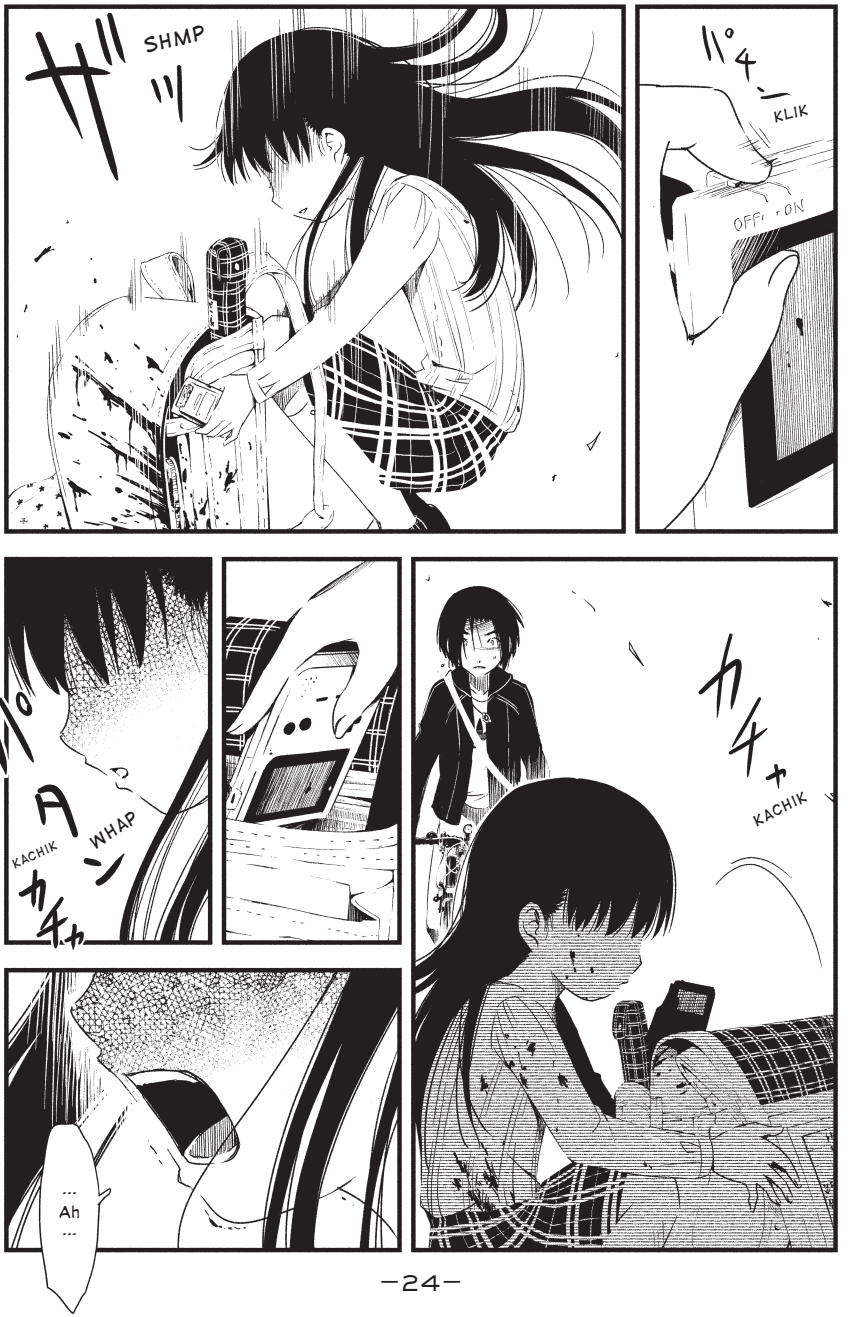
ooo
Both of them
were struck
ooo

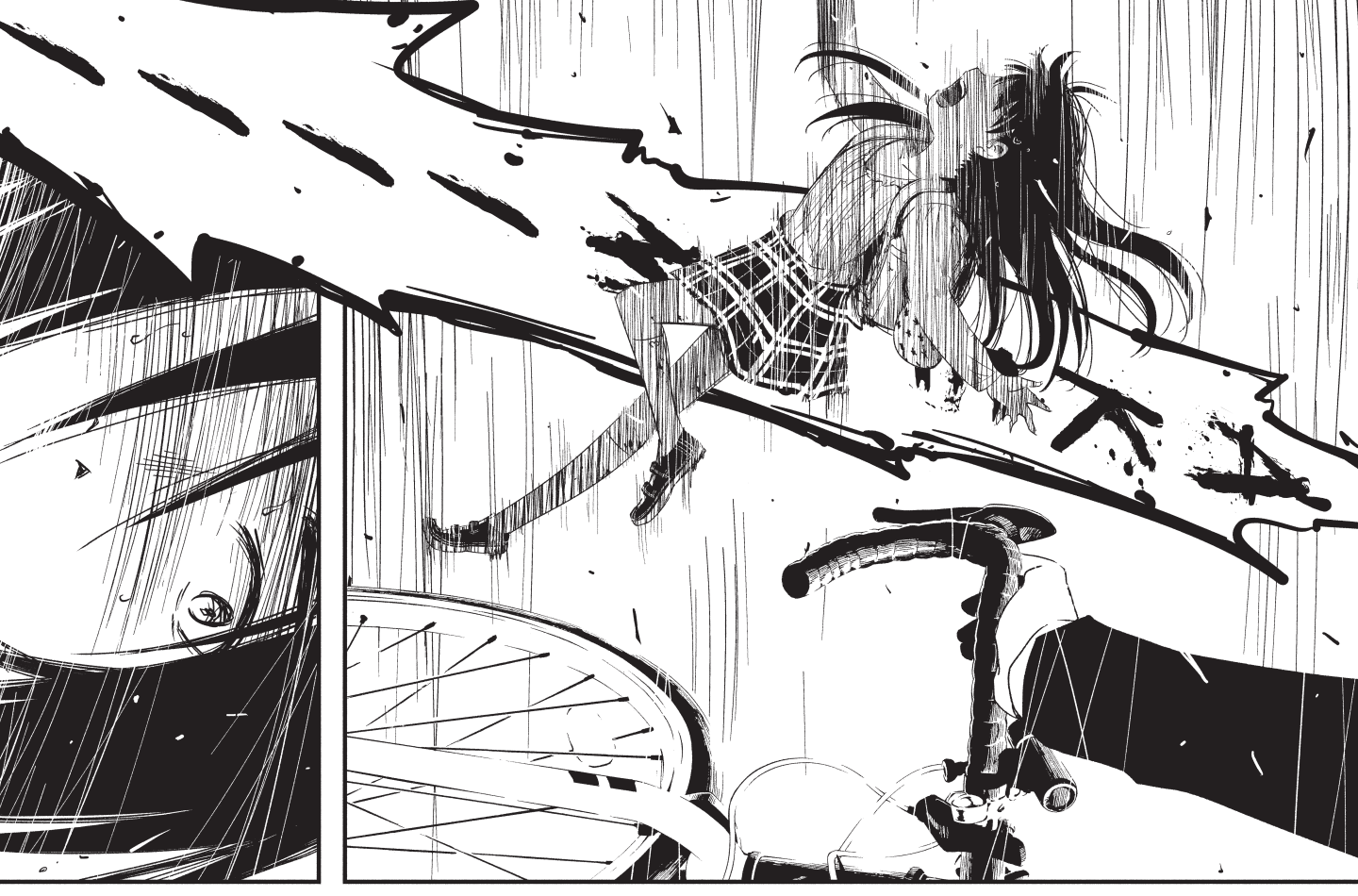
No...
oo
One of them...
oo
One of them is okay...



What ...?
BADUMM
Wh... Why ...?

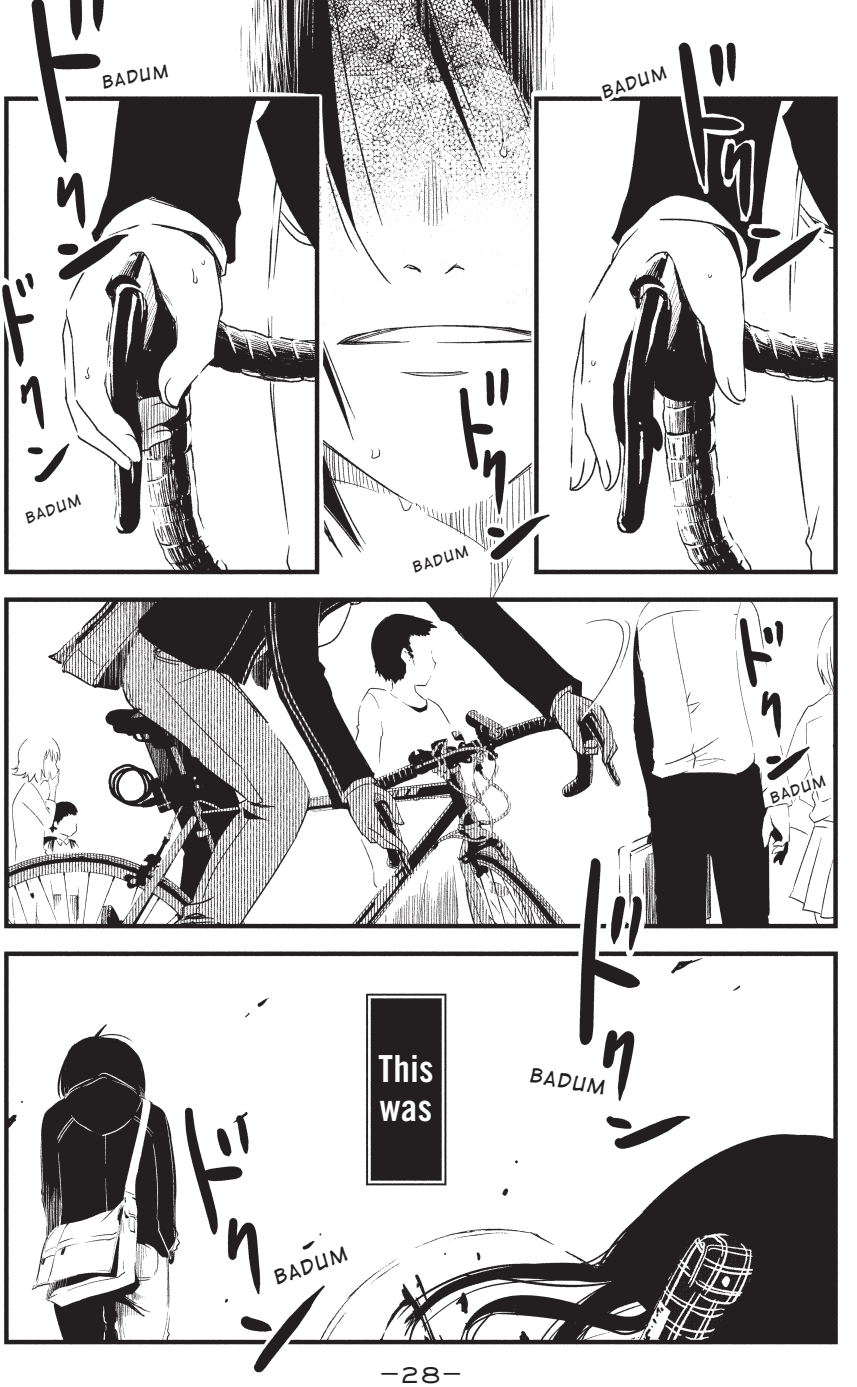
BADUM
But her friend just died
right behind her?
BADUM
BADUM

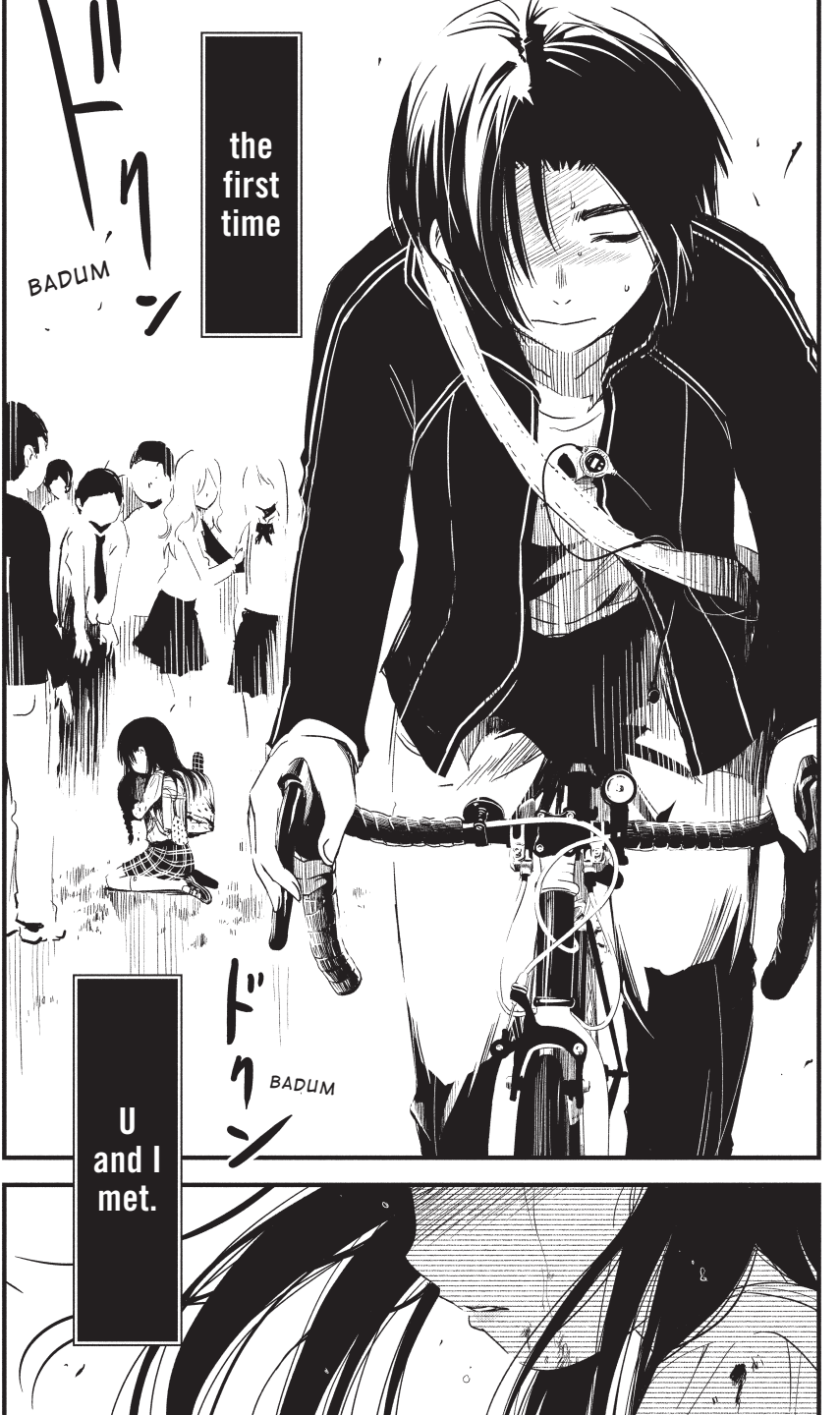

SHMP
KLIK
OFF
ON
KACHIK
WHAP
KACHIK
...
Ah
...



AA
AA
HH
HH
...I saw it...
That girl ...

She took the game she was playing...
made sure to save first...
and then ran to her friend...!!


BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
This was

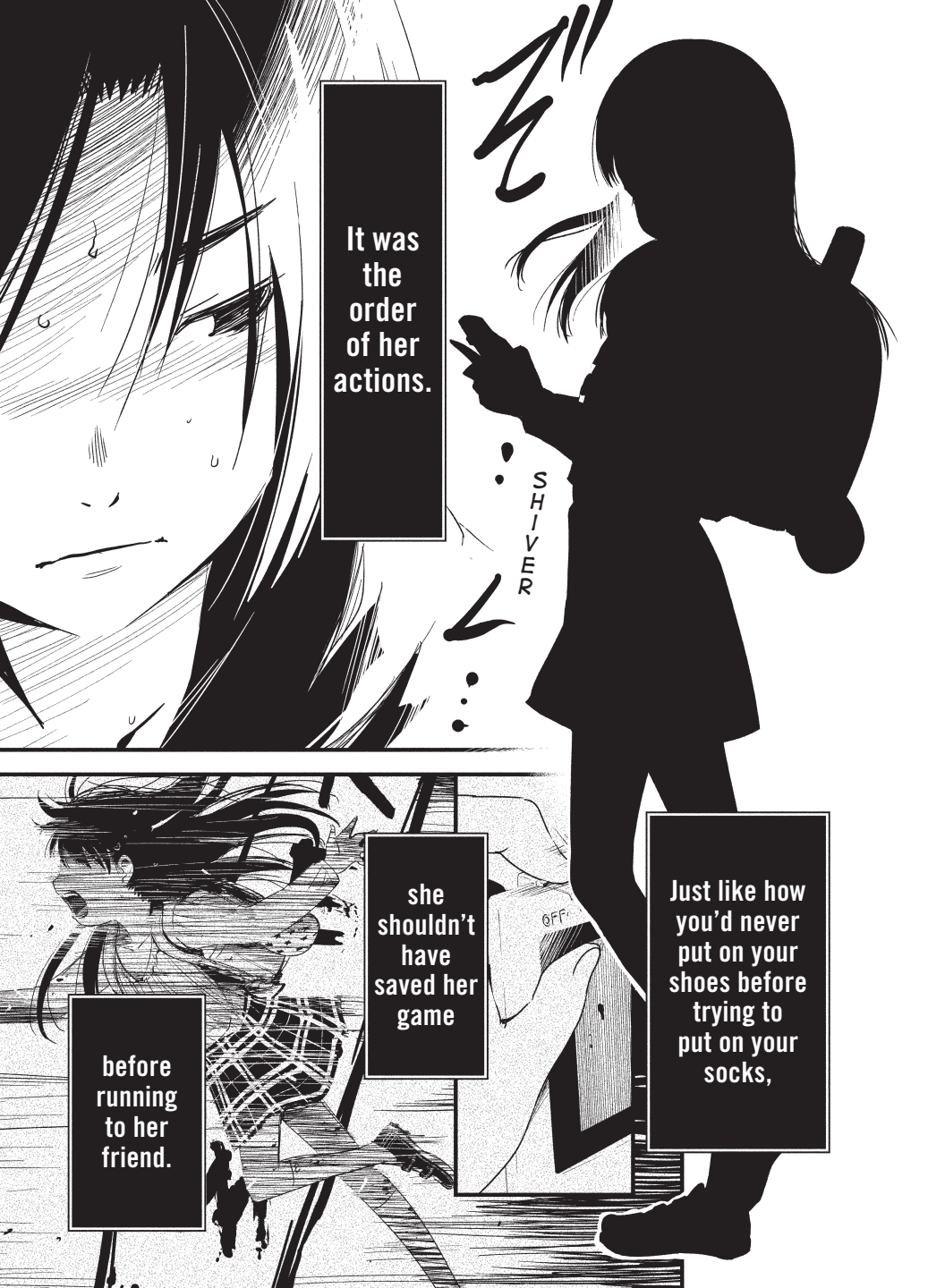

ドクン
BADUM
the first time
ドクン
BADUM
U and I met.

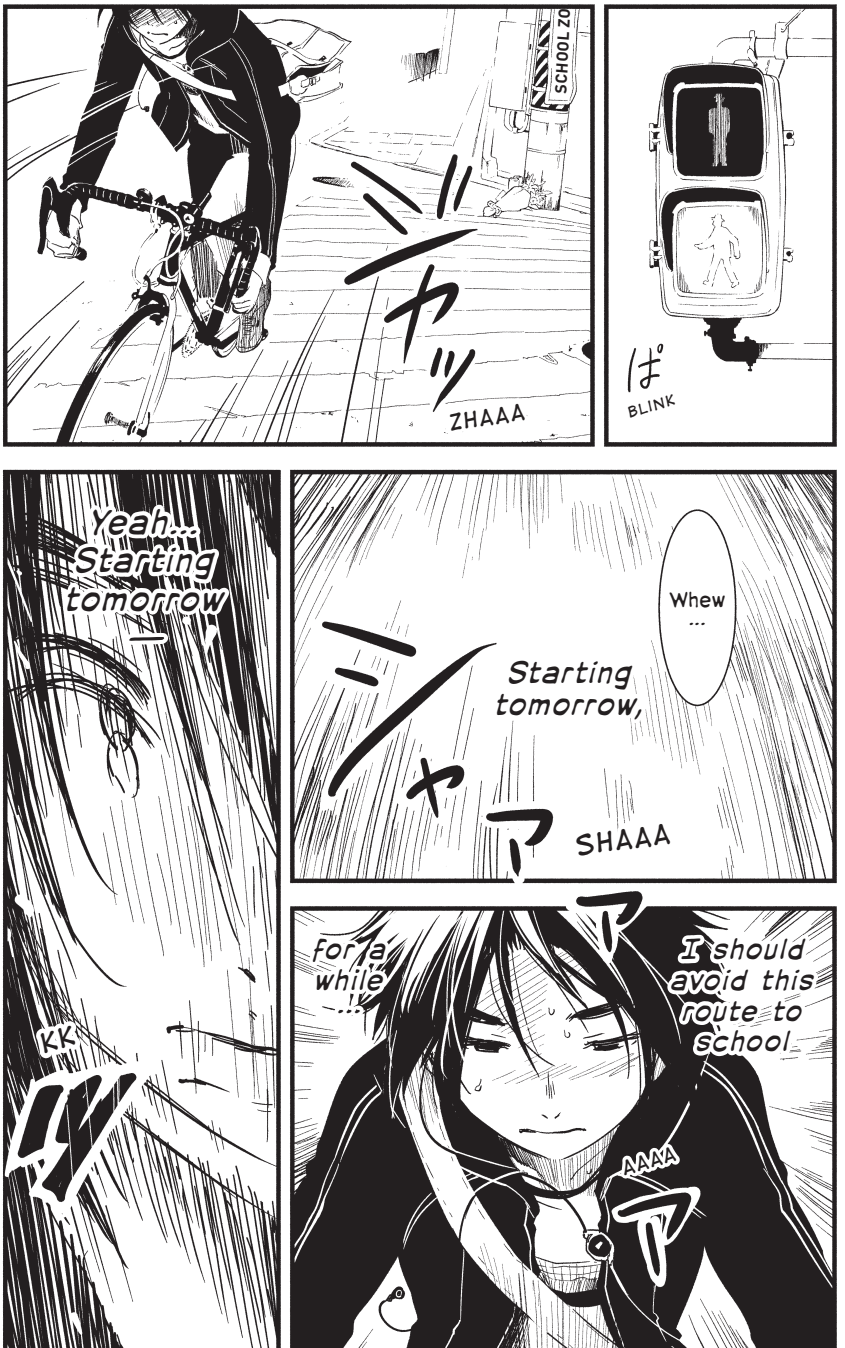
2

ゴォーーン
GOOONG
ゴォーーン
GOOONG
... How many days ...
has it been now...?

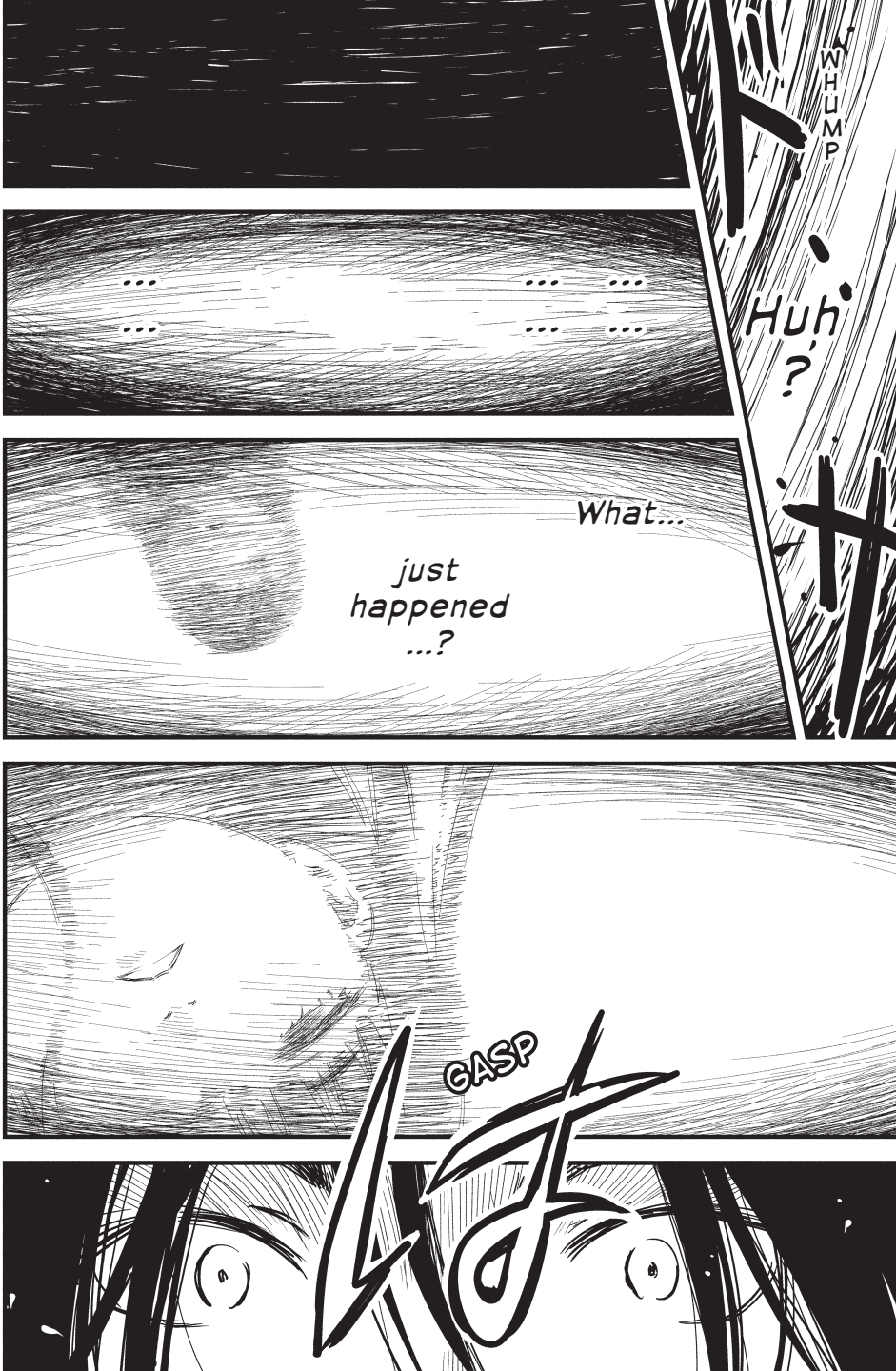
I guess I really gotta get back...
to class ...
...
KSS
SHK
BSHFF
SHAAA

SCHOOL ZONE
SKREE
Pie
Dear Akemi
We'll never forget you. It's okay if you go to heaven, but please come back.

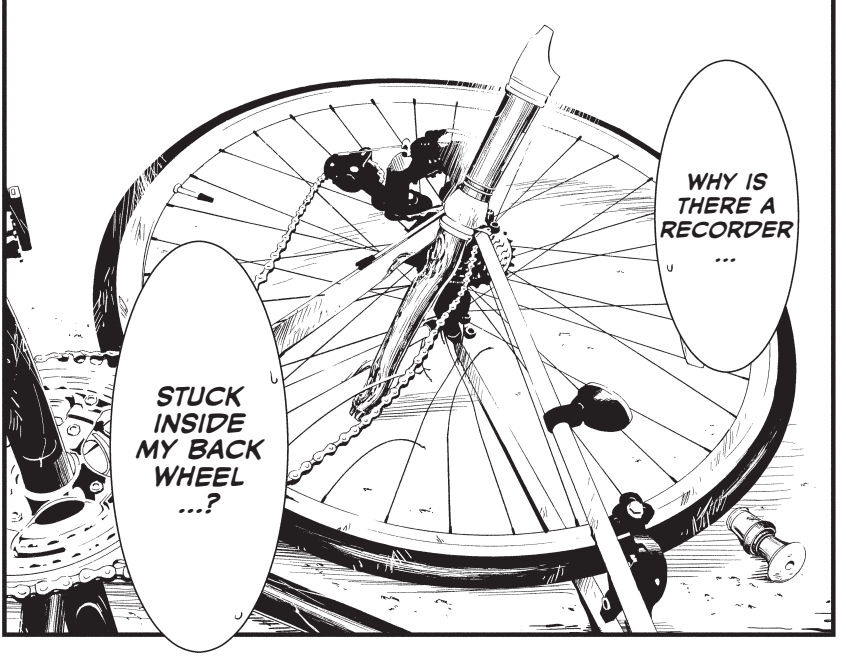

It was the order of her actions.
SHIVER
Just like how you'd never put on your shoes before trying to put on your socks,
she shouldn't have saved her game
before running to her friend.

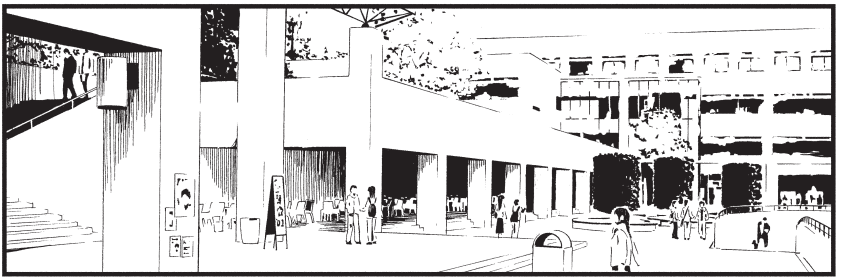

SCHOOL ZO
ZHAAA
ぱ
BLINK
Whew ...
Starting tomorrow,
SHAAA
Yeah... Starting tomorrow —
KK
I should avoid this route to school
for a while ...
AAAA

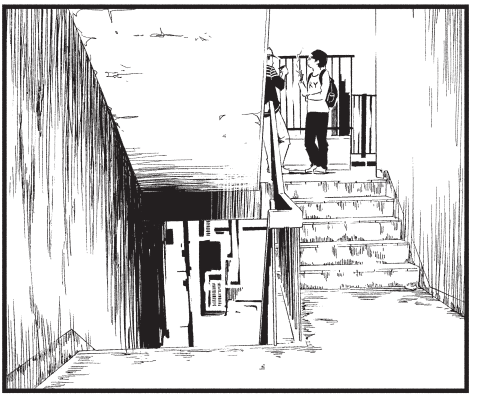
SLAMM
Huh
?


WHUMP
Huh?
...
...
...
...
What...
just
happened
...?
GASP

THP...
...
Oww
...
RISE
おい...
...
Wha
...?
Why
...

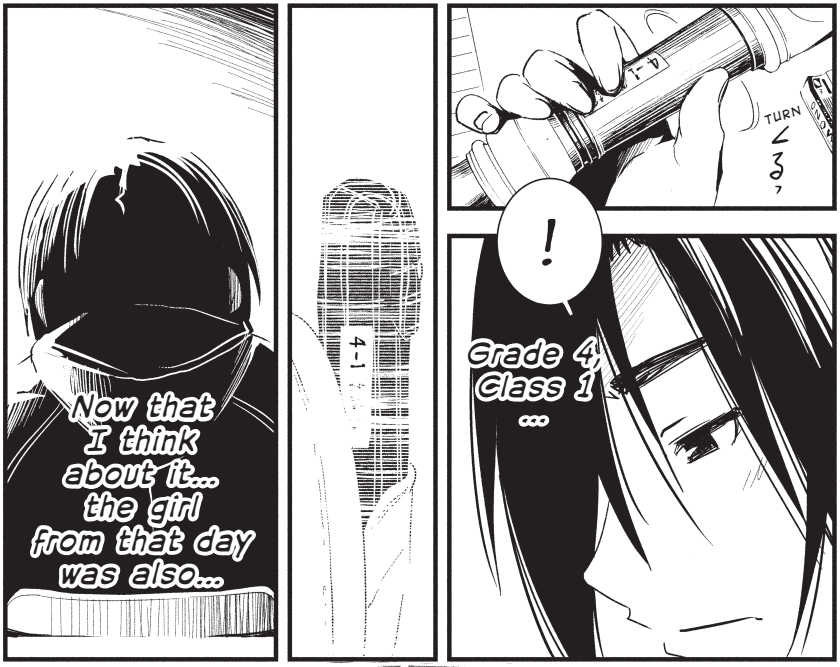

WHY IS THERE A RECORDER ...
STUCK INSIDE MY BACK WHEEL ...?





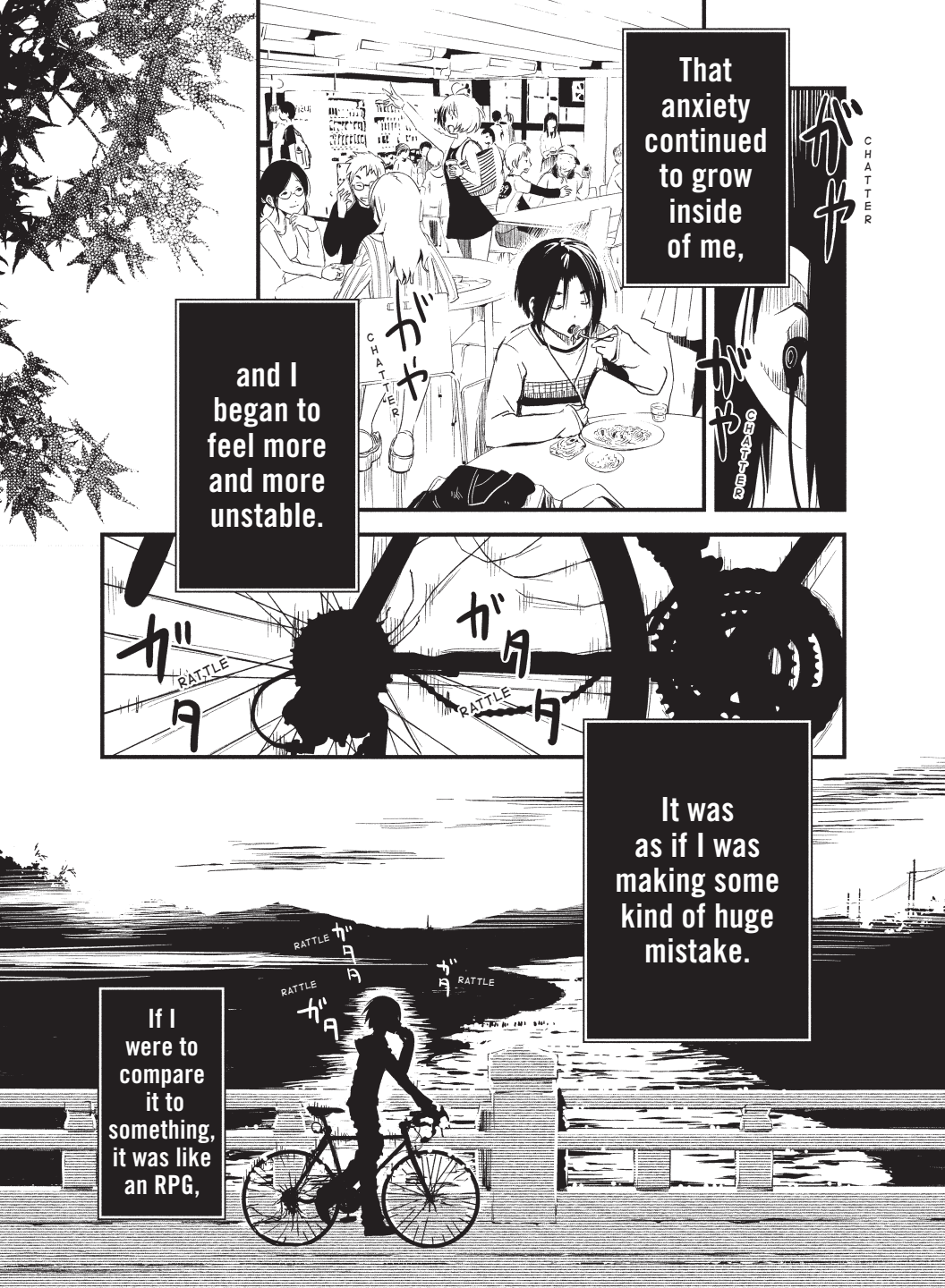
Culture Fest! Come On By!
PICTURE BOOK EXHIBIT

I was able to break my fall safely thanks to those judo classes I used to take, but still...
Hmm...
Is it normal for something like that to get stuck in your wheel when you're riding a bike ...?
So a grade schooler must have dropped this on the road,
and then something kicked it up and it got tangled in my wheel spokes.
...That's what must've happened, right...?


Now that I think about it... the girl from that day was also...
4-1
4-1
TURN
めくる
!
Grade 4 Class 1 ...

SNIFF
じゃ：
…

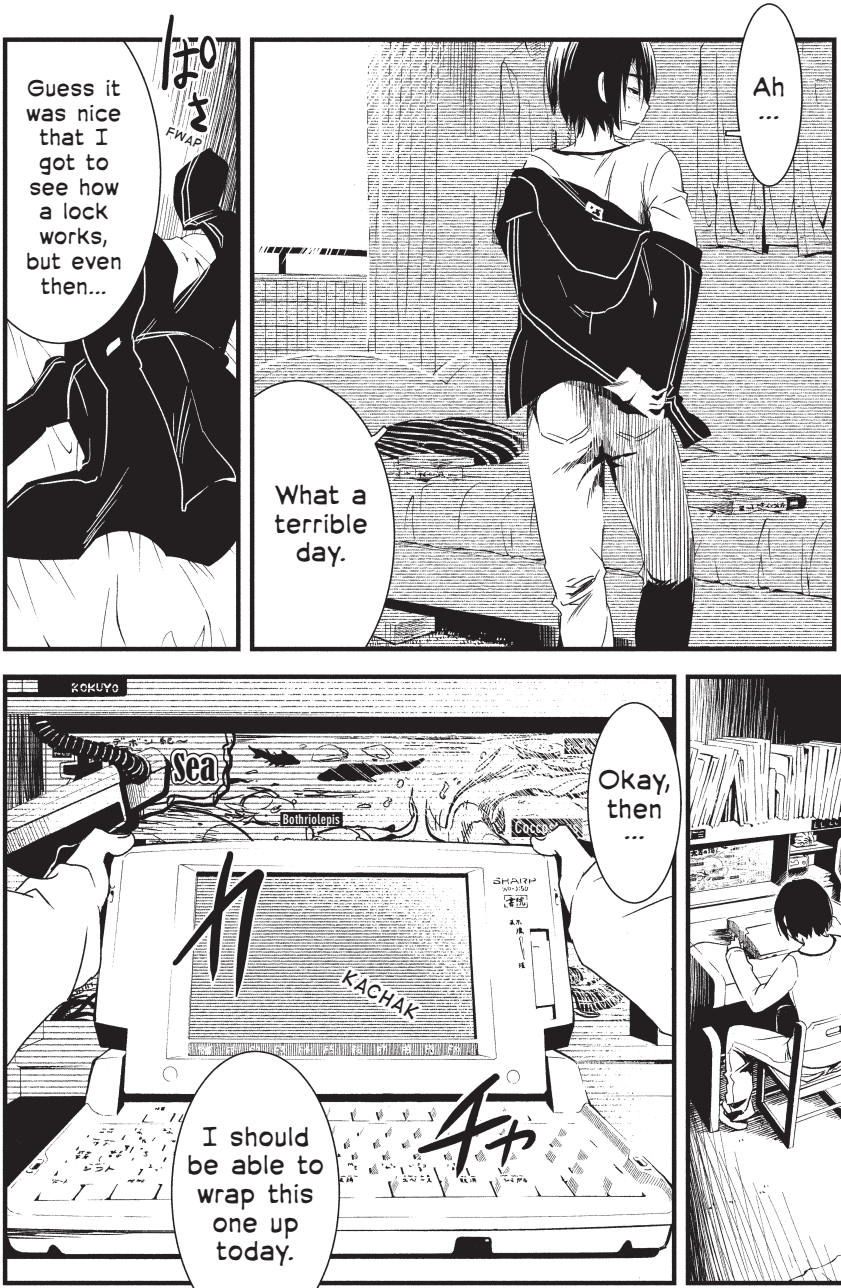
I might not go so far as to call what I had a “bad feeling.”
You watch Chura-san?
Oh yeah, I did! ❤
But at the very least,
it was enough foreshadowing that looking back later, I can say, “I knew it.”

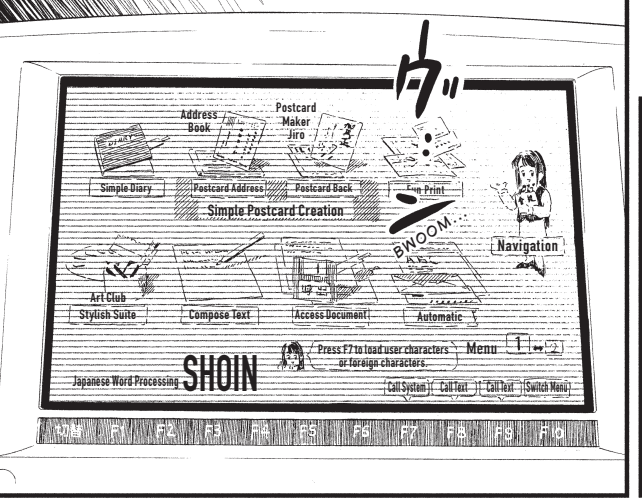

That anxiety continued to grow inside of me,
and I began to feel more and more unstable.
It was as if I was making some kind of huge mistake.
If I were to compare it to something, it was like an RPG,
CHATTER
RATTLE

where I had wandered off in the wrong direction
straight onto a route I had no chance of ever overcoming ...
RUSTLE
ごそ
Where is my key ...?
RUSTLE
ごそ
Did I drop it when I fell...?
Hmm ?

BEEP
CALL ENDED
All right. Thank you.
Three hours from now? Uhm... Yes, that's fine.
Apart-ment 601.
... Yes.
But oh well ...
I wanted to get home early so I could write more of that novel...
Locksmith Emergency
GOOONG
ゴォーン

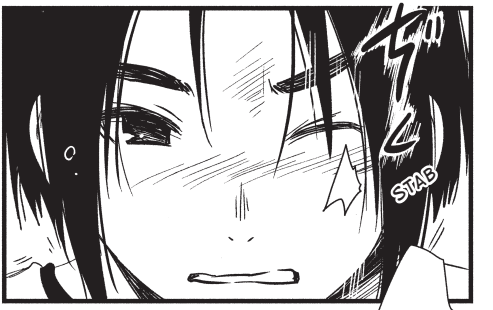
You know... I could use this in a novel.
Sure.
STAAARE まじ
まじ
All right, I'll be putting on this new lock.
Oh...
KACHAK カチャ
CHAK チャッ
6
GACHAK ガチャ


Ah ...
What a terrible day.
ぽさ
FWAP
Guess it was nice that I got to see how a lock works, but even then...
KOKUYO
Sea
Bothriolepis
Cocco
SHARP
KACHAK
Okay, then ...
I should be able to wrap this one up today.
KREAK


Address Book
Postcard Maker Jiro
Simple Diary
Postcard Address
Postcard Back
Fun Print
Simple Postcard Creation
BWOOM...
Navigation
Art Club
Stylish Suite
Compose Text
Access Document
Automatic
Press F7 to load user characters or foreign characters.
Menu
Japanese Word Processing
SHOIN
Call System
Call Text
Call Text
Switch Menu

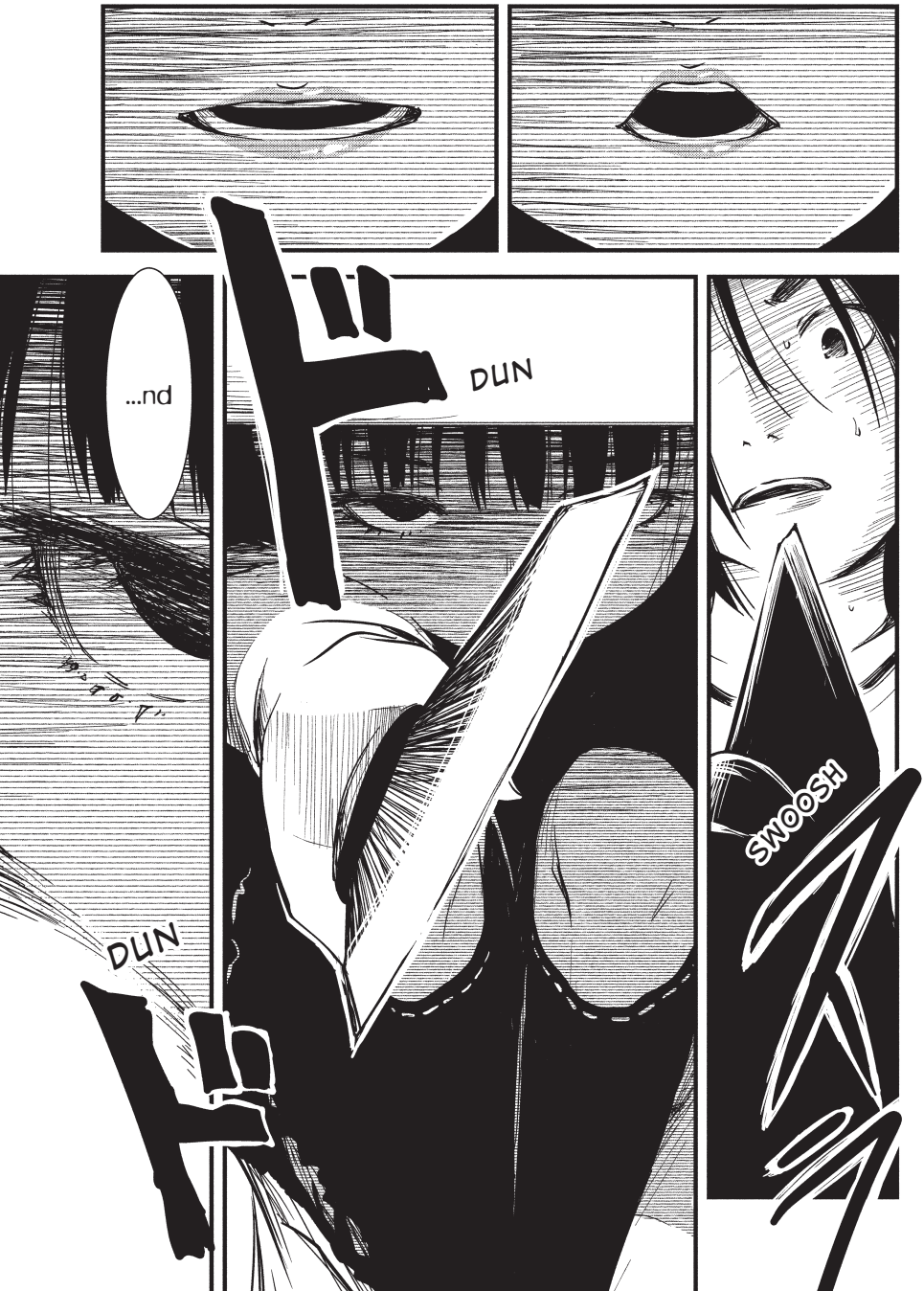
PACHINK
On Power On
Switch Font
Half-Width
Full-Width
Light

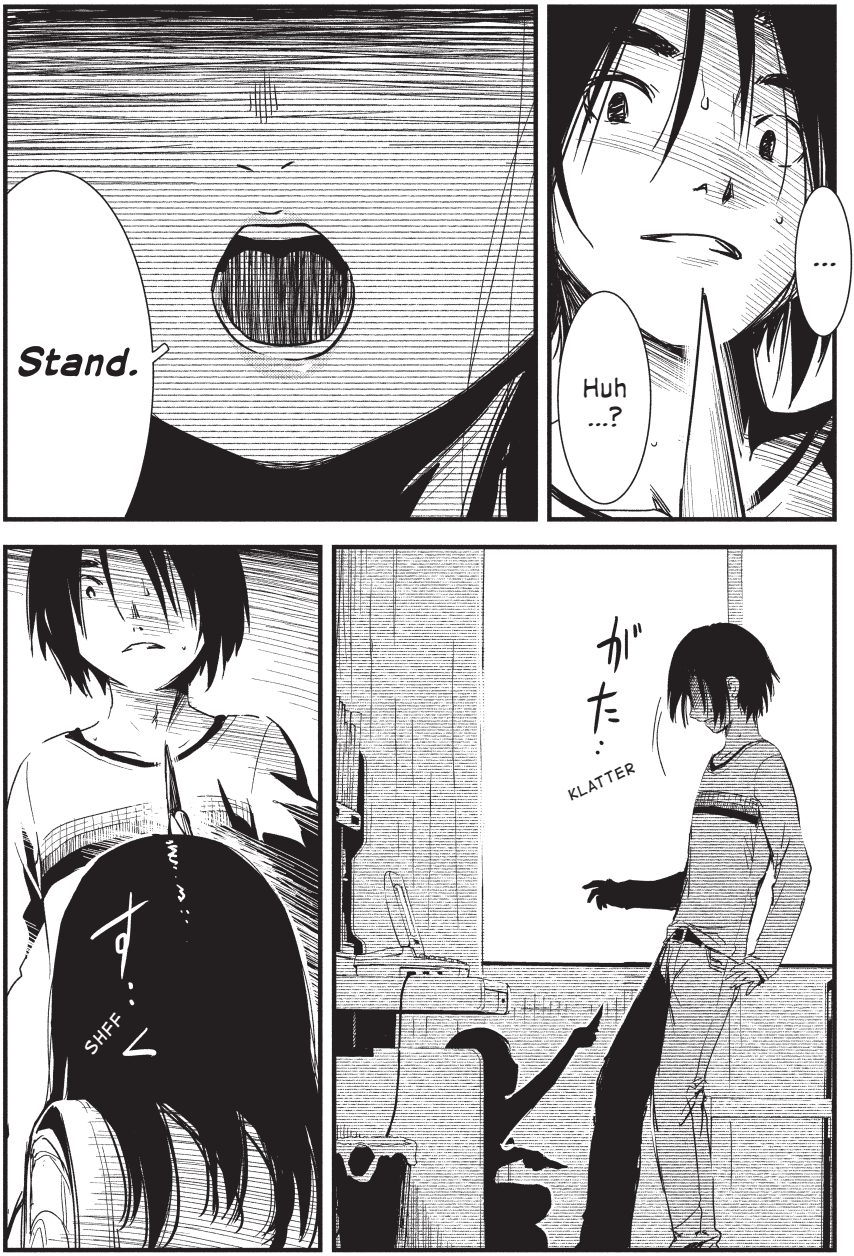
A tack ...?
No, it feels like something stabbed my calf...

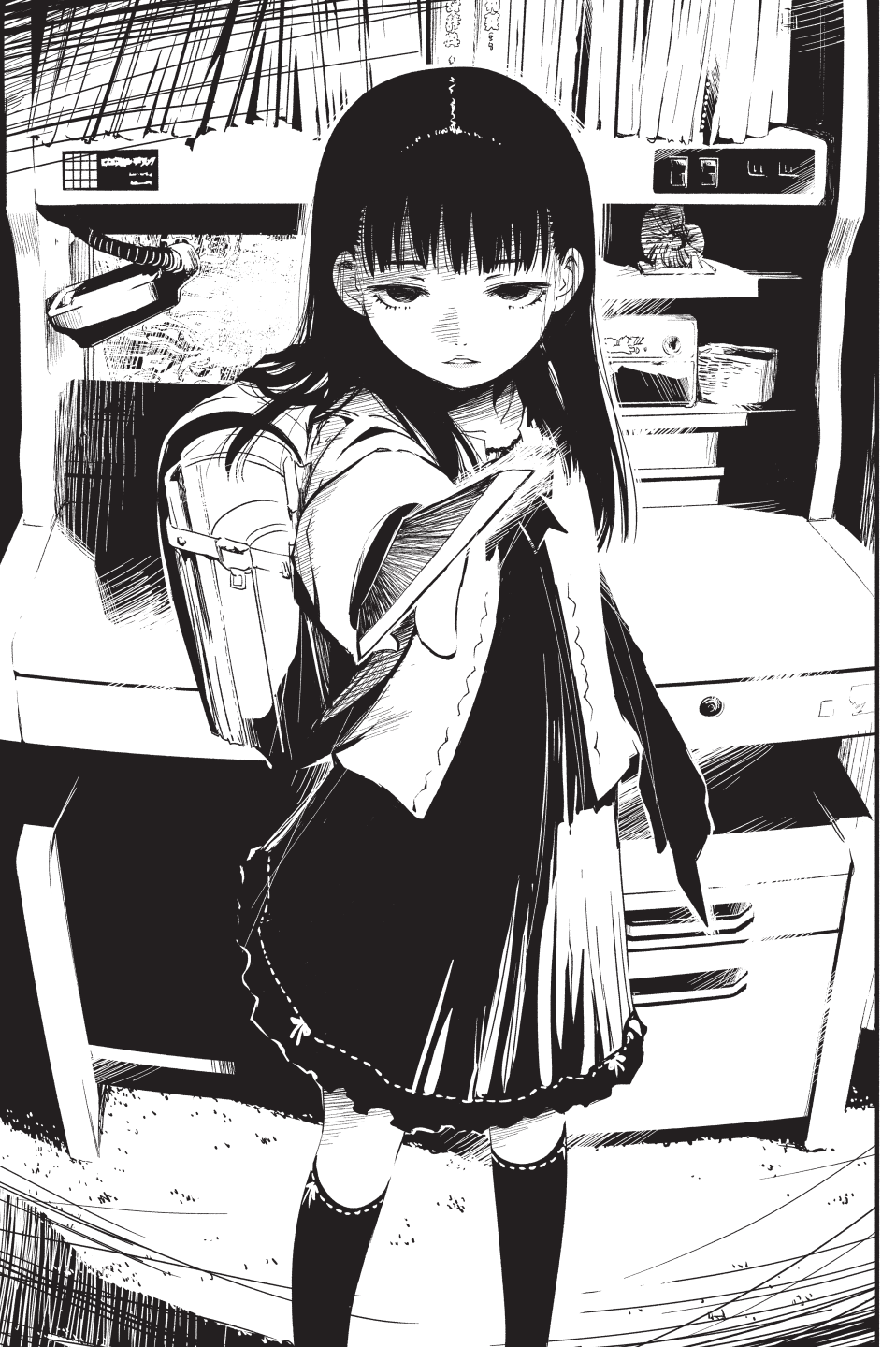

STAB

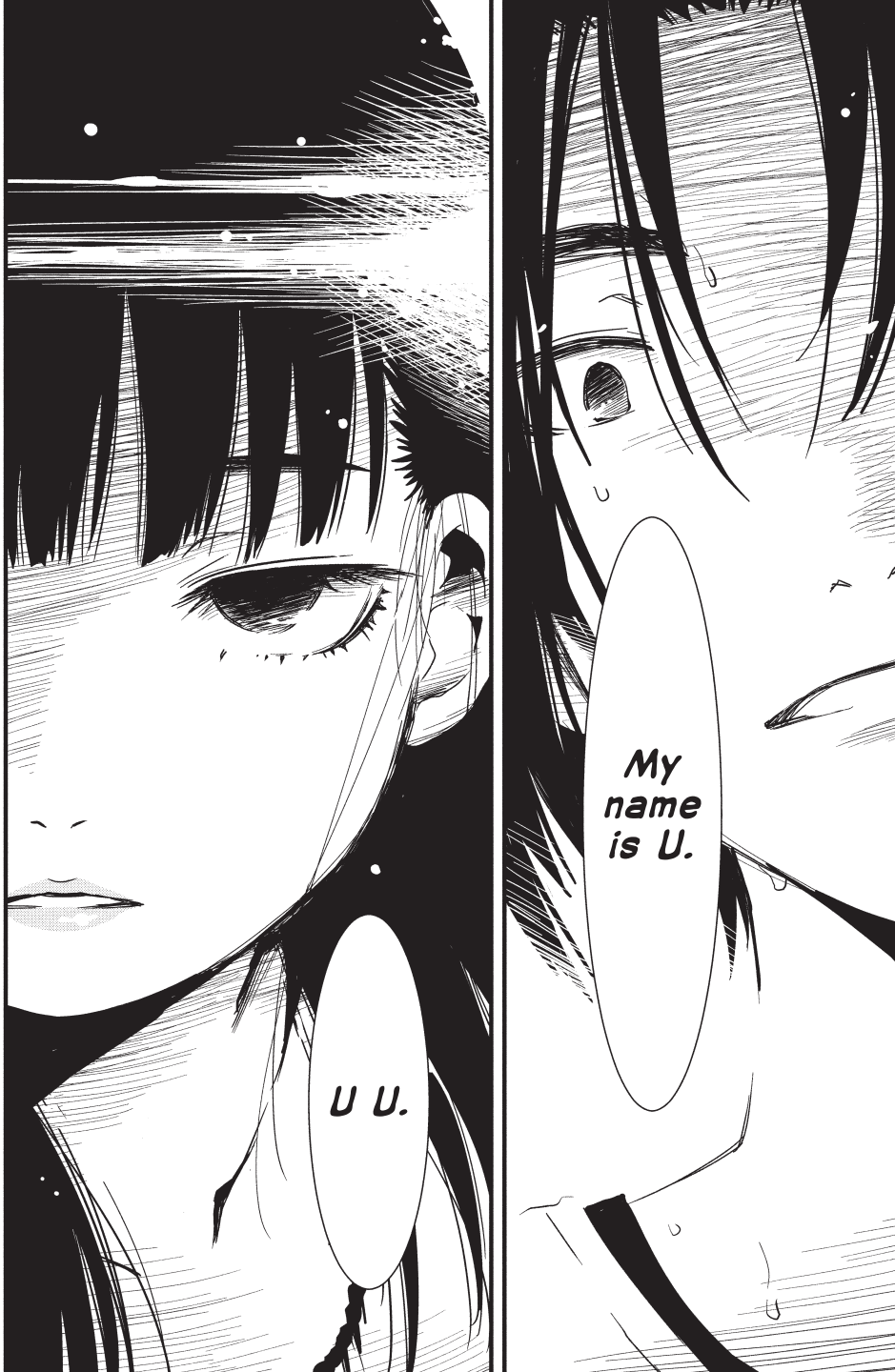
KREAK
Ow ...?!

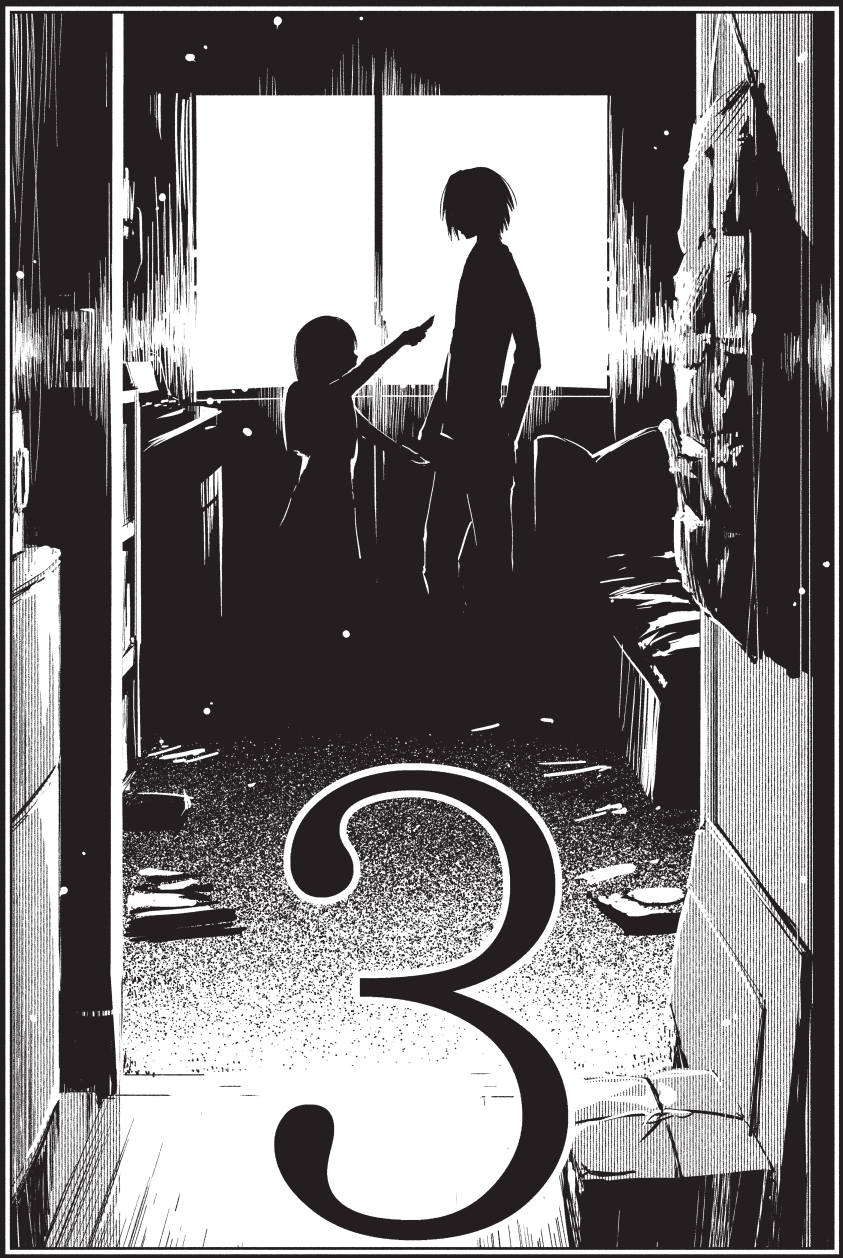
DUN
DUN
DUN
Wha
?!
DUN
DUN


...nd
DUN
DUN
SWOOSH


Stand.
Huh ...?
...
がた…
KLATTER
すー…
SHFF




My name is U.
U U.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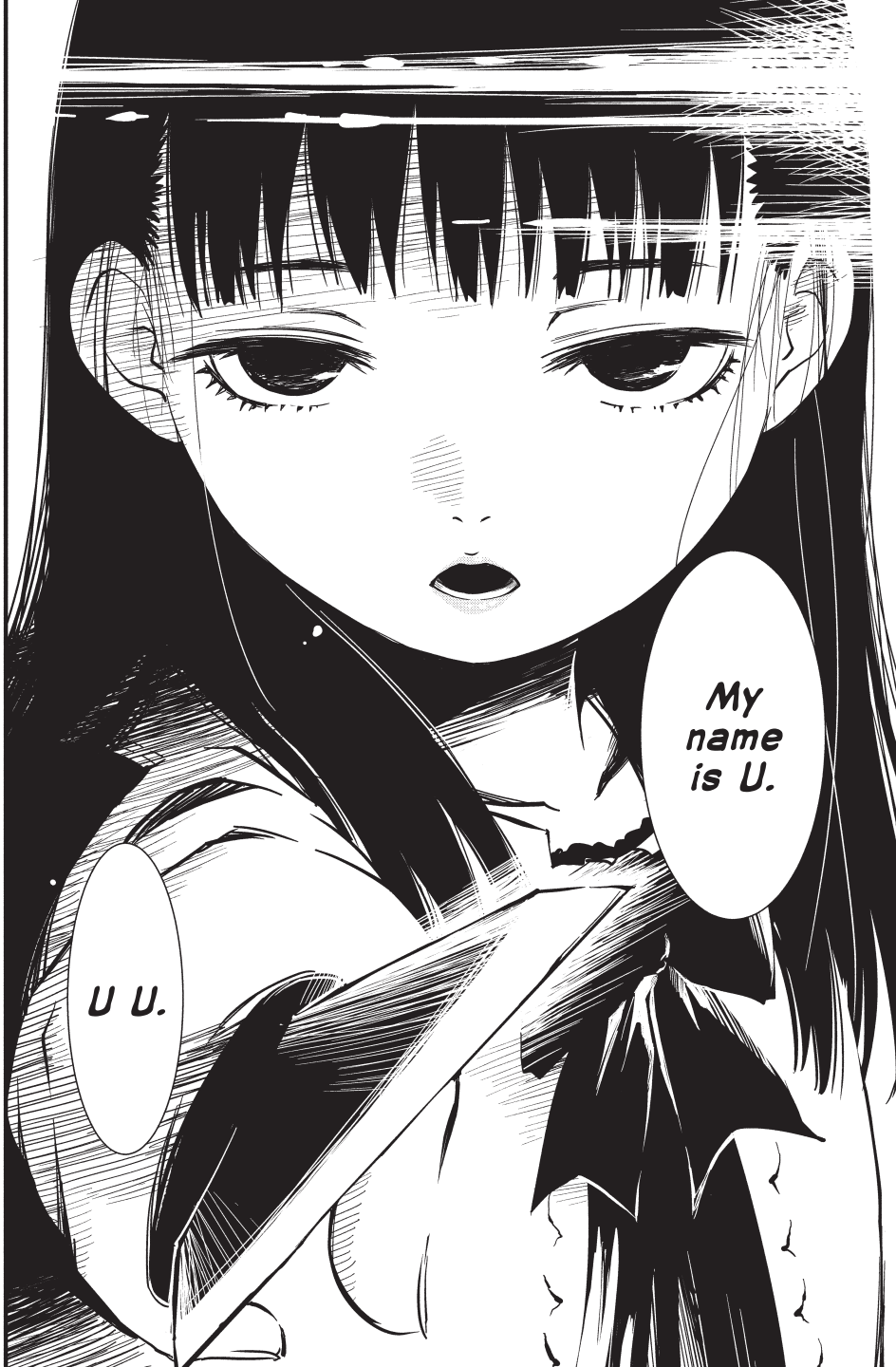
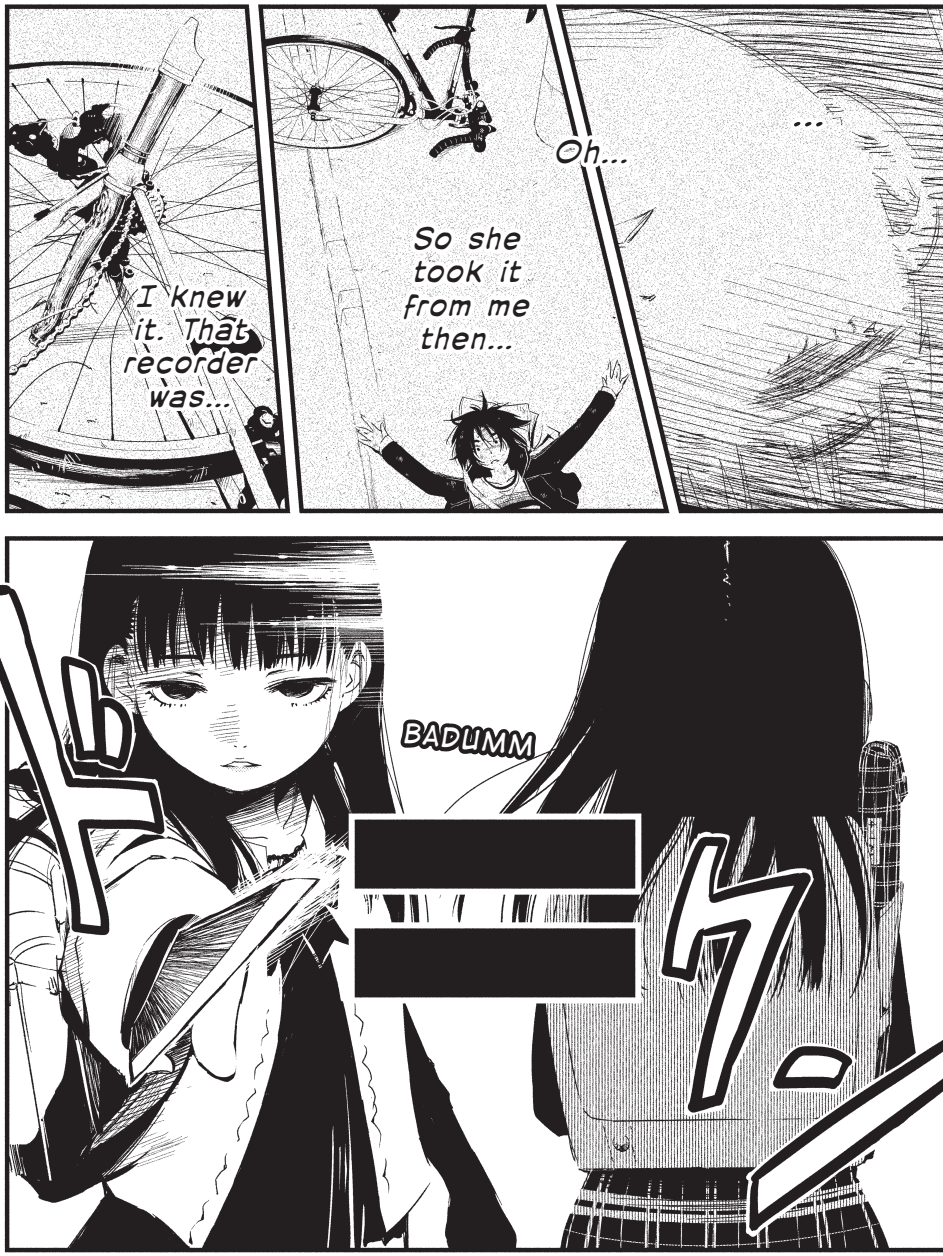
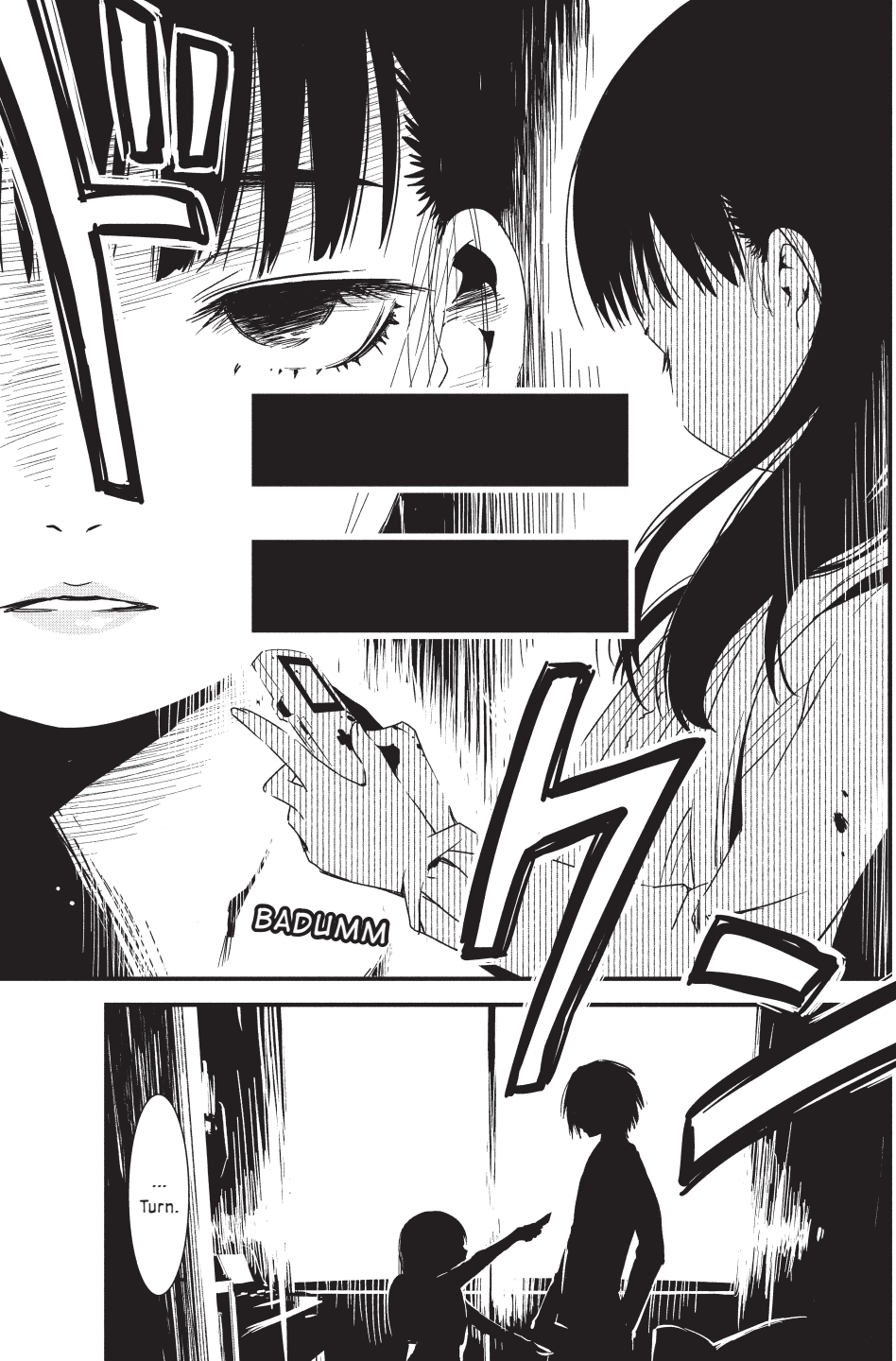

My name is U.
U U.

Her name wasn't really a pair of alphabet letters, of course. She gave me her regular Japanese name, but since this is an event and an incident, not a tale, I can't make that public here.


I knew it. That recorder was...
So she took it from me then...
Oh...
...
BADUMM

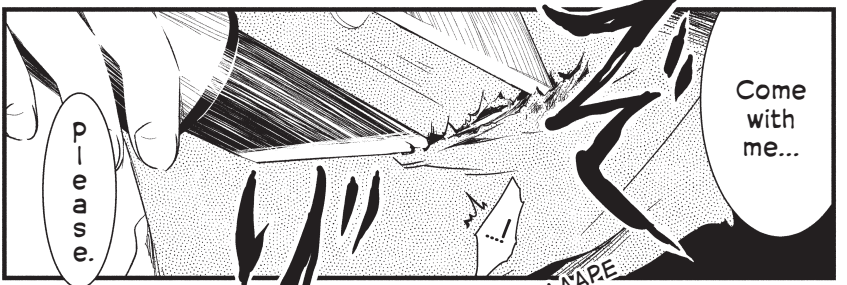

BADUMM
...
Turn.

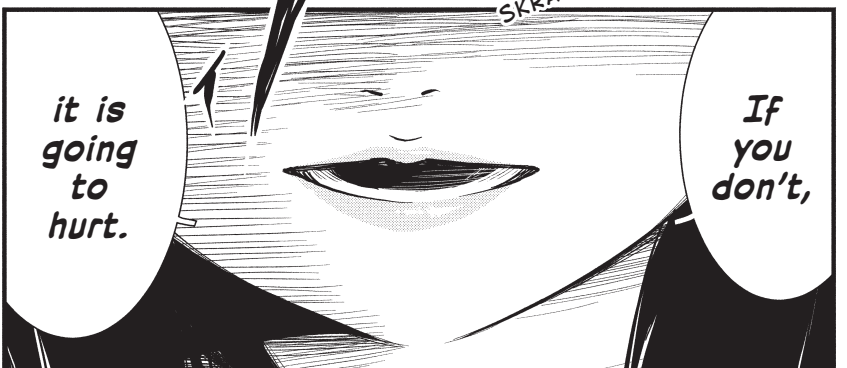
Turn around.
ズキン
THROB
ズキ
THROB
ズキ
THROB
...
ズキン
THROB
The moment I turn around ...
ズキ
STING
ズキン
STING
ズキ
STING
is she gonna... stab me...?
DRIP
STABB
ズキ
STING
ズキ
THROB
ズキ
THROB
ズキ
THROB
...
ズキ
STING
ズキ
STING

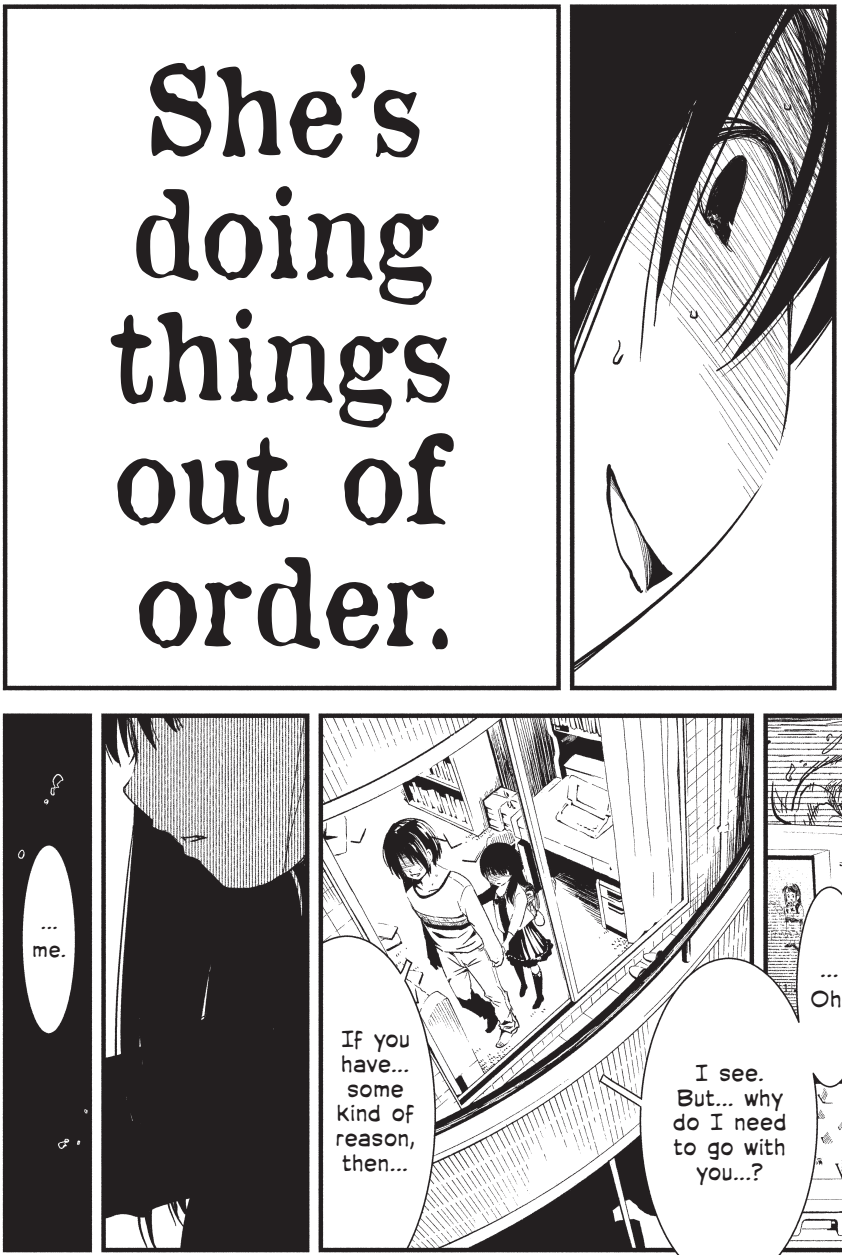
SCREAM
fair
pretend nothing is happening
sadist
ACT TOUGH
CALCULATED
COOL
like a novel protagonist
TRAGEDY
FIGHT BACK
BLADE
STEAL
THE KNIFE
JUDGEMENT
PAIN
KICK
FOR SHOW
Masochist
FEAR
CONFUSION
SELF-DEFENSE
girl
FIGHTING A CHILD
death
IDIOT
GUILT
BLEEDING

Come ...
...Just what exactly ...
are you trying to do here ...?

STAY COMPOSED


Please.
...!
Come with me...


SKRAAAPE
it is going to hurt.
If you don't,

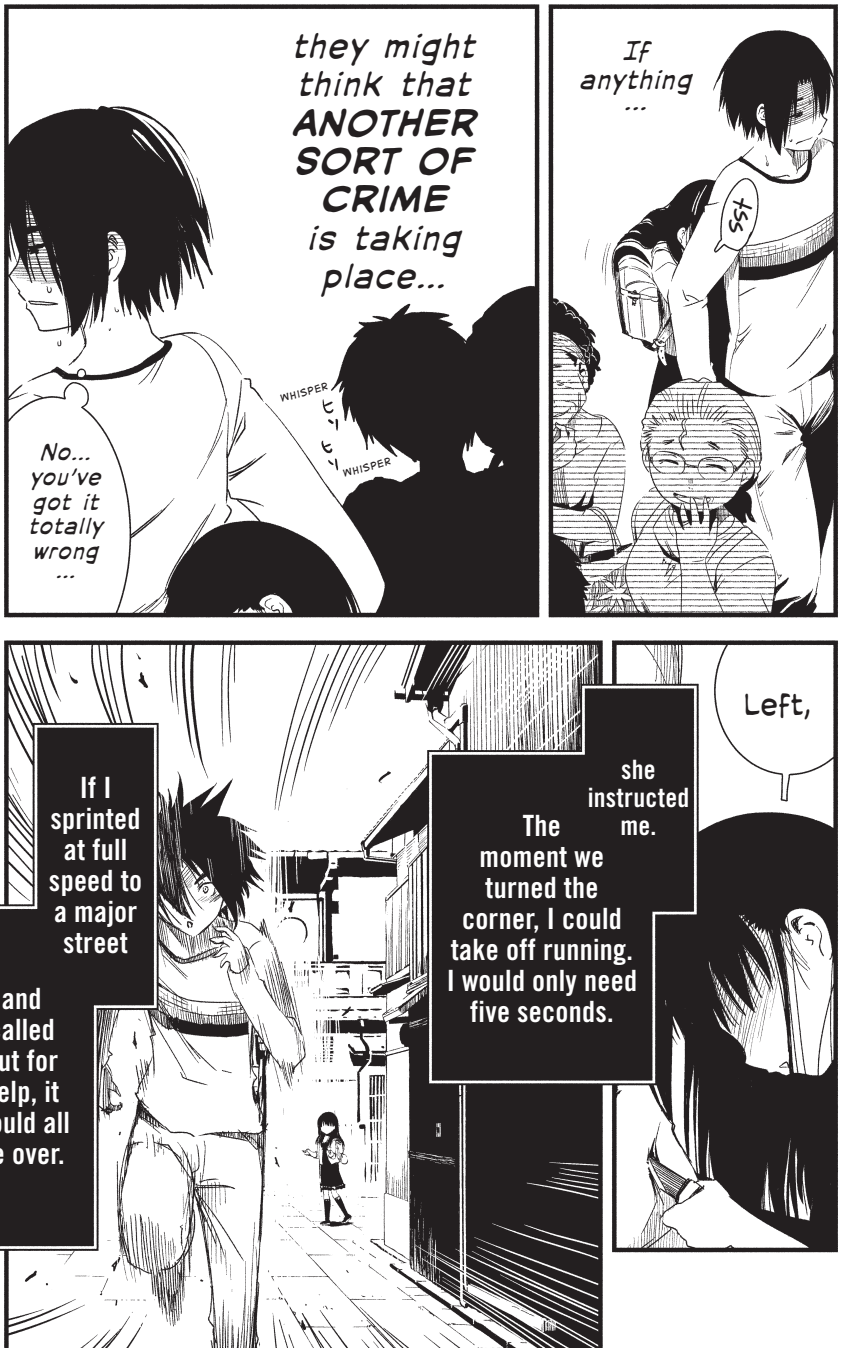

She's doing things out of order.
... me.
If you have... some kind of reason, then...
I see. But... why do I need to go with you...?
... Oh.
Coccosteus
SHARP

Be-
cause
you
saw
me.
You
saw
me
and
so
I'm
taking
you.

then yes, I did indeed see her.
If she puts it like that,
...
...
In that brief moment,
I saw who this girl, U, really is.
I saw right through her...

ざ
ZHFF
ざ
ZHFF
ざ
ZHFF
ざ
ZHFF
ざ
ZHFF
ざ
ZHFF
Kankaine
Shrine
有限会社
株式会社

I doubt anyone around us would think that a college-aged man ...
Oh, you! Come on!
Ah ha ha!
is being abducted by a grade-school girl right now"...
HUB
ガヤ
ガヤ
BUB
ガヤ
BUB

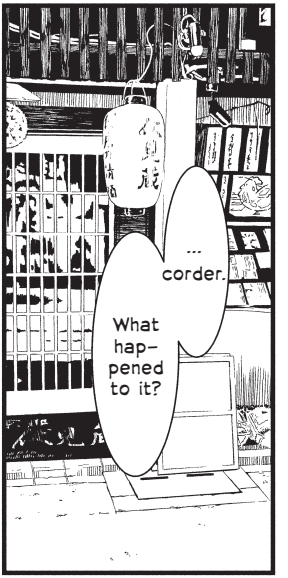

they might think that ANOTHER SORT OF CRIME is taking place...
WHISPER
ヒソ ヒソ
WHISPER
No... you've got it totally wrong ...
If anything ...
Sss
Left,
she instructed me.
The moment we turned the corner, I could take off running. I would only need five seconds.
If I sprinted at full speed to a major street
and called out for help, it would all be over.

That wasn't even the rationale I came up with at the time.
"I'm not doing it if there's any risk at all of it going wrong, even a one percent chance."
But I know that my past self didn't do that.

was that I couldn't think of anything to do.
All that happened

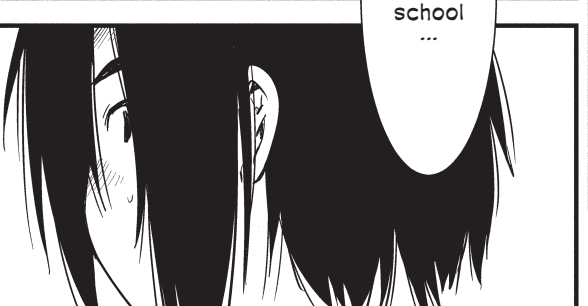
that was just the sort of person I was back then.
no matter what slick excuse I say,
No matter how calm I pretend to be,

Huh ...?
Your corder ...?


... corder.
What hap- pened to it?

My recorder.
Oh ...

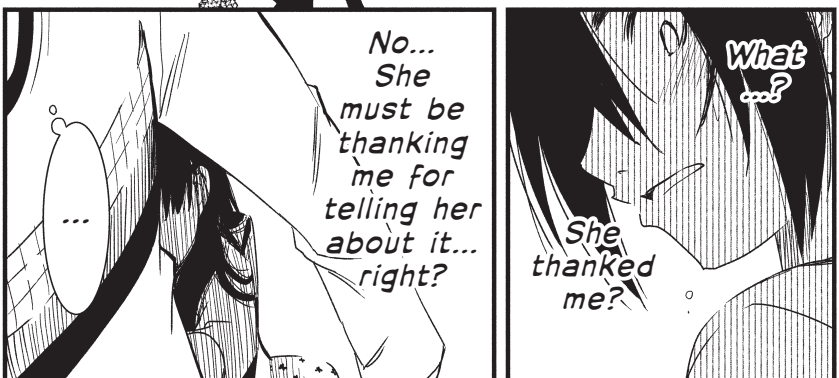
...

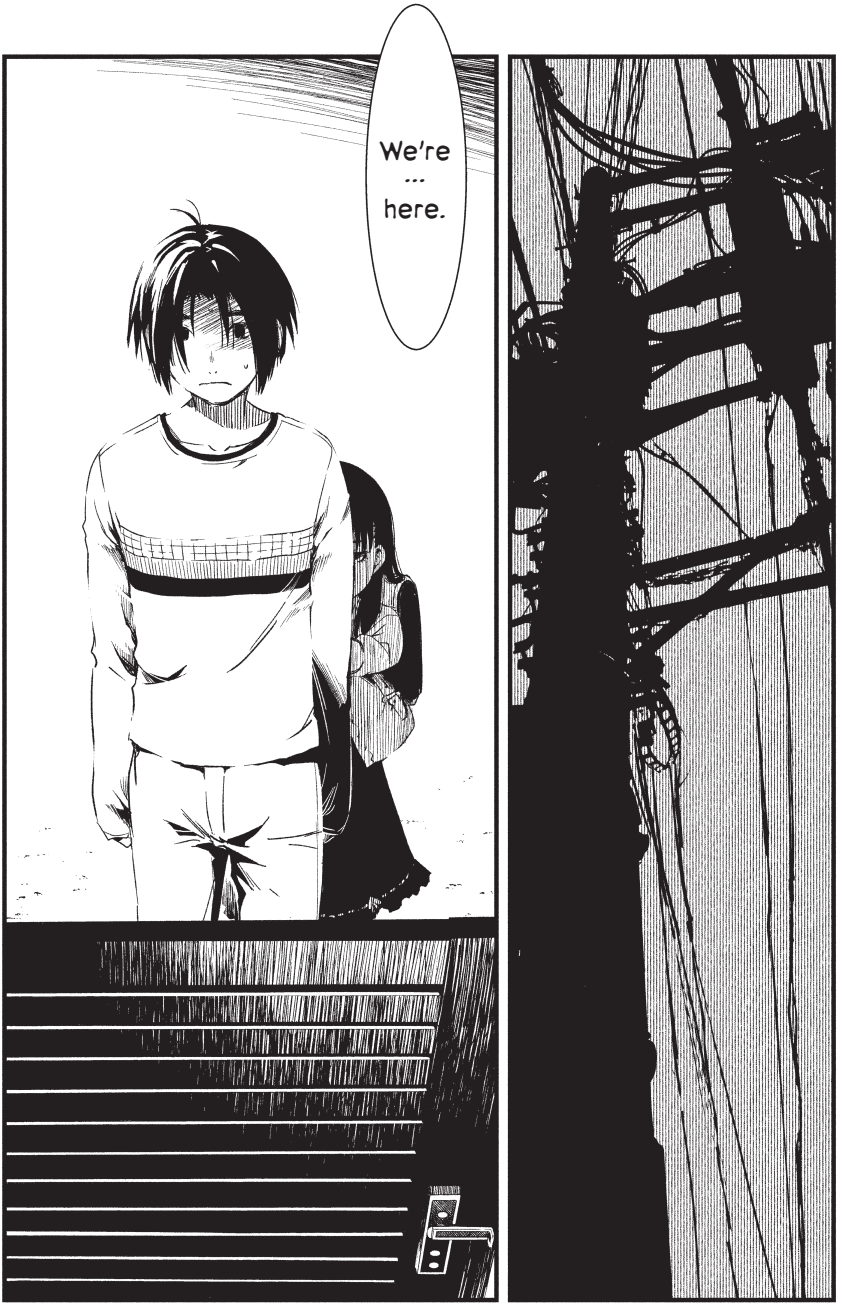

I need it for school ...

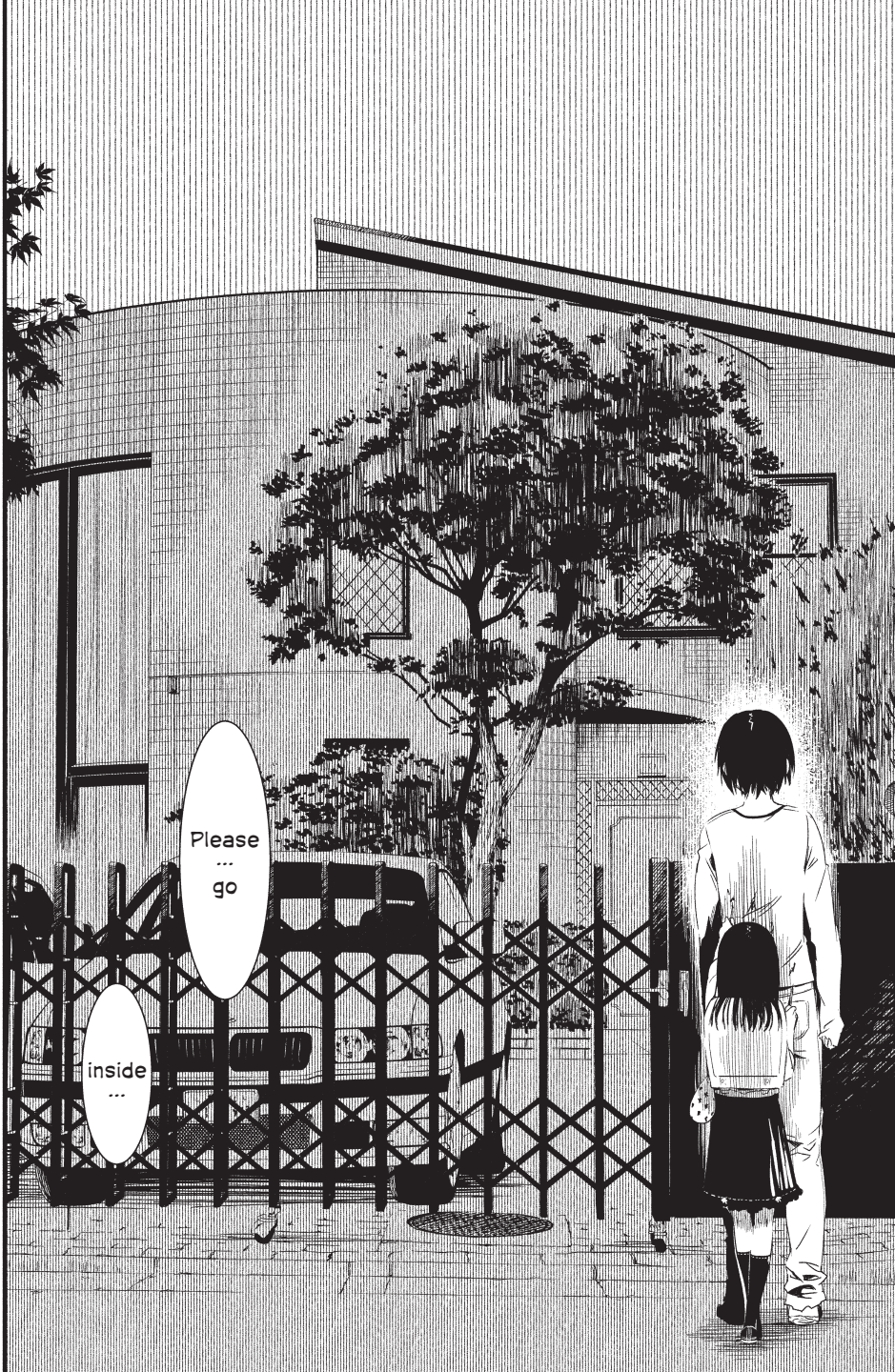
Well... it's still in my bag inside my apartment ...

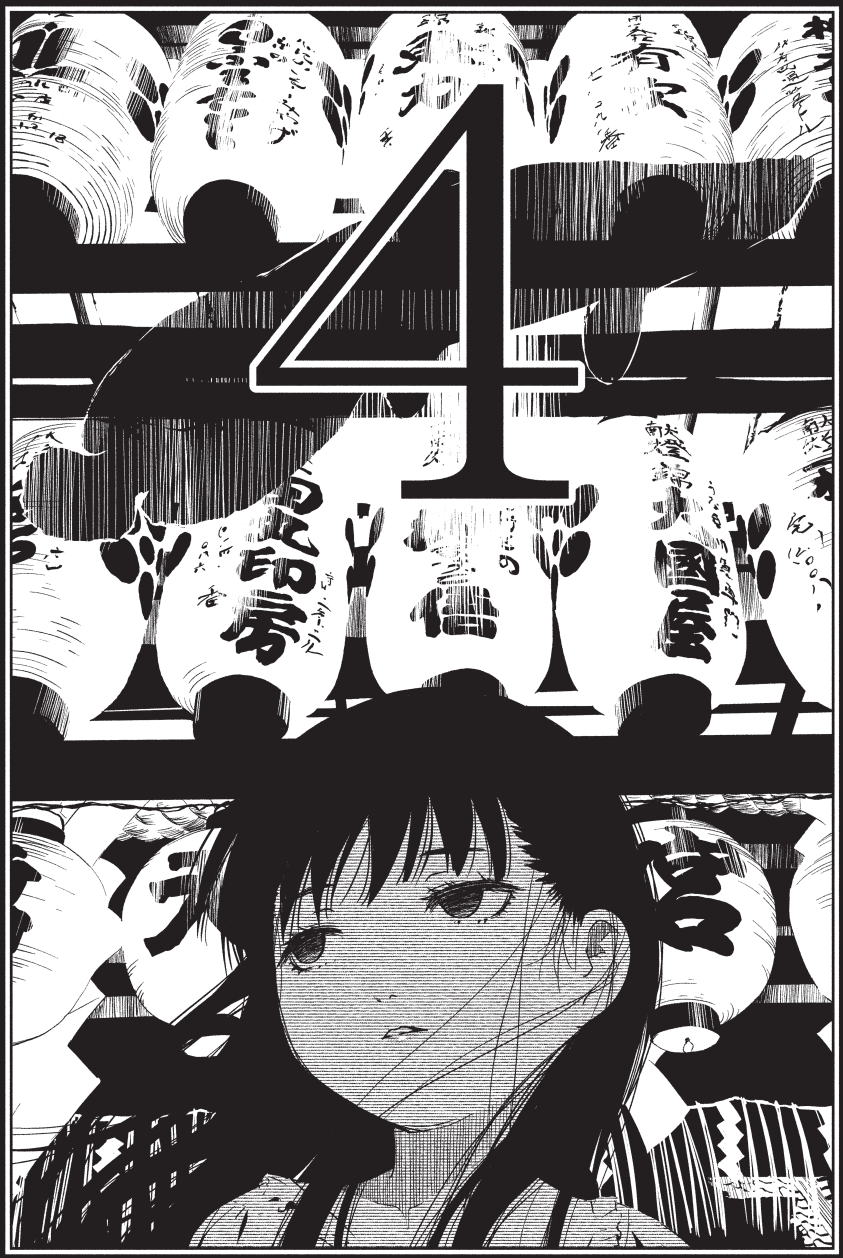
SHIVER
JAB
...
Oh.
I see.
So, uhm... I don't think you can use it anymore? So...
that recorder broke when it got stuck in my bike wheel...
Even if you do,

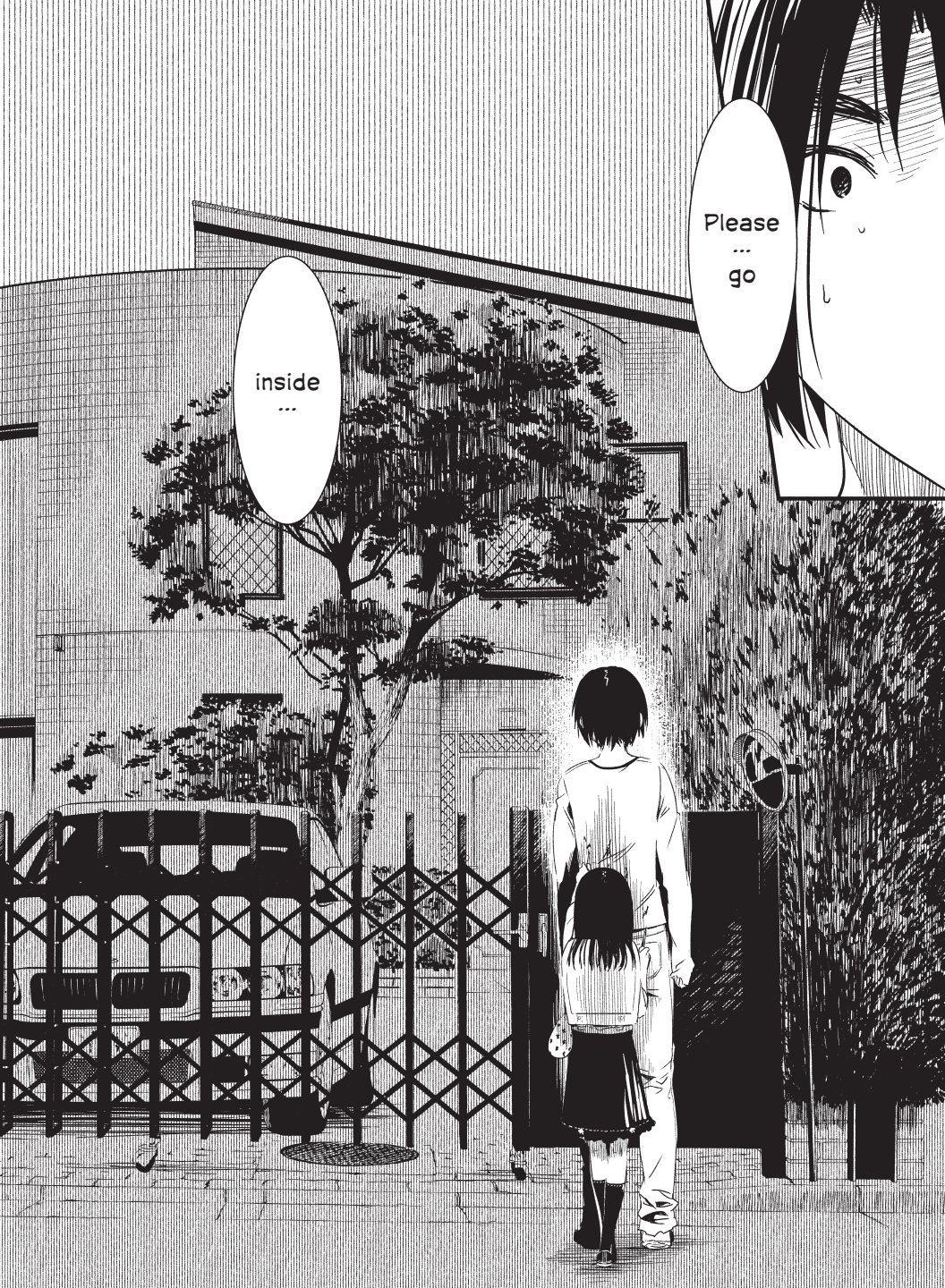
Thank you very much.


...
No... She must be thanking me for telling her about it... right?
What ...?
She thanked me?


We're
...
here.


Please
...
go
inside
...




Please
...
go
inside
...

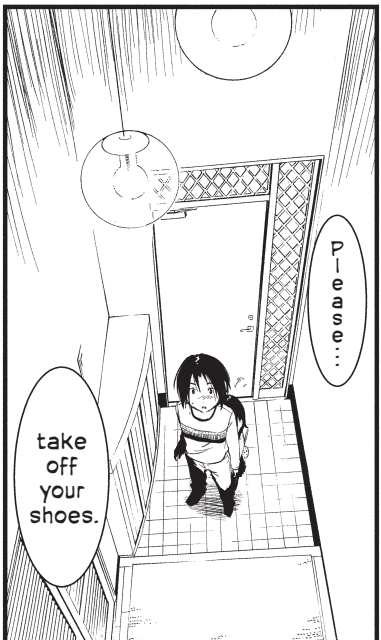
Why would she take me
to her own home...?! Don't tell me...
What? This place is a mansion ...
The name-plate makes it seem like it's her house ...
KREEAK

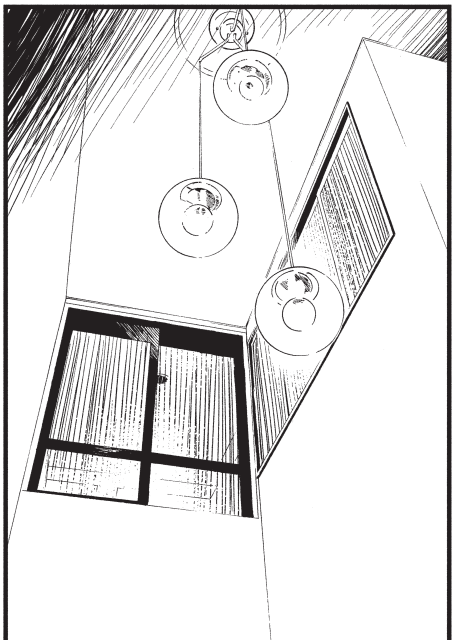
23rd Novel Mephius Newcomer Prize
SURPRISE AWARD PARTY
HOORAAAY
Congratulations! Do your best!
That girl there's my grand-daughter!
No, that'd never happen. Not even in a manga...
Hee hee! Did we surprise you?
Congrats on winning the prize!
The moment I open the front door...

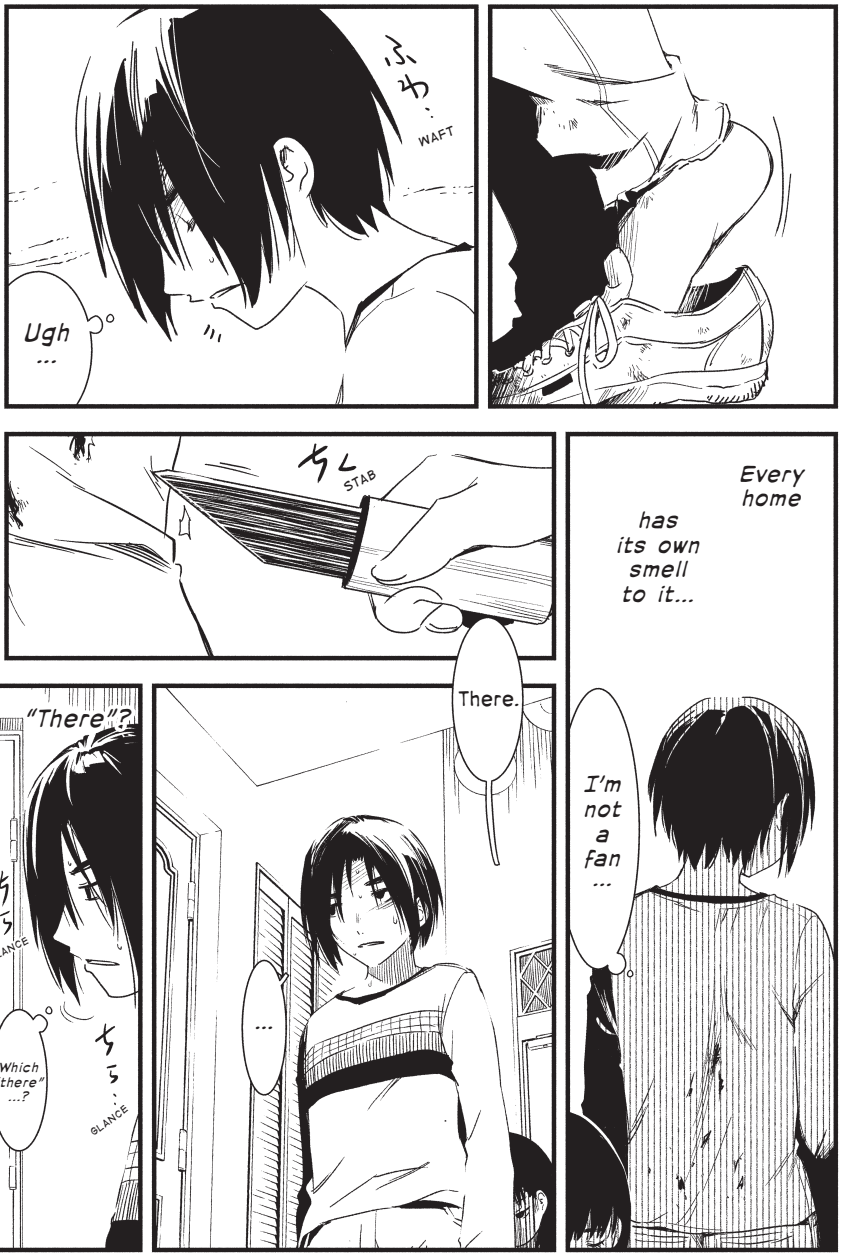
Huh ?!
... Huh?
SHFF
Uh...?
SHOCK
What is she... doing ...?
Unlocking the door...?
But she just brought me all the way here at knifepoint ...
CHAK
TURN
DUN
DUN
...

逃げ……る？
Do I... run?
DUN
虚
Off-guard
DUN
解放？
Am I free?
罠……？
わな
Is it a trap...?
ノーリスク？
No risk?
Intentional
意図
虚……
Off-guard...
虚
Off-guard
DUN
しゅっ
SWOOP
Please, go inside.
...
Off-guard
虚
DUN

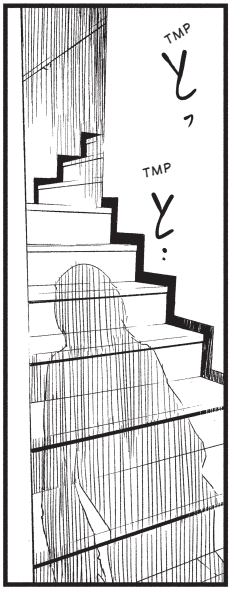
チャ
CHAK

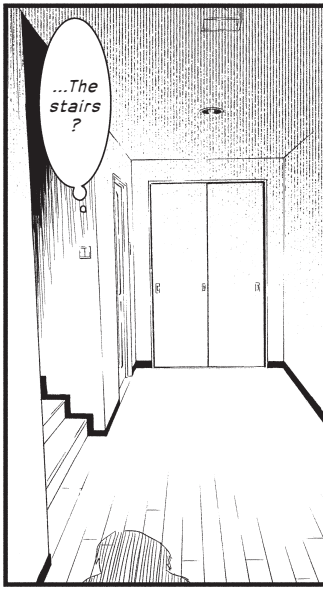

Please...
take off your shoes.

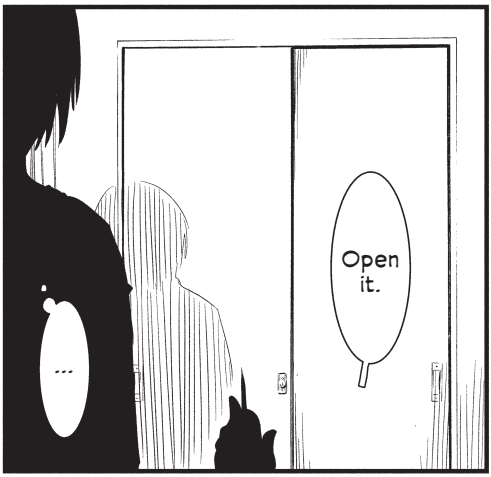



ふわ
WAFT
Ugh
...
Every home has its own smell to it...
I'm not a fan...
ちく
STAB
There.
...
"There"?
ちら
GLANCE
Which "there"...?
ちら
GLANCE

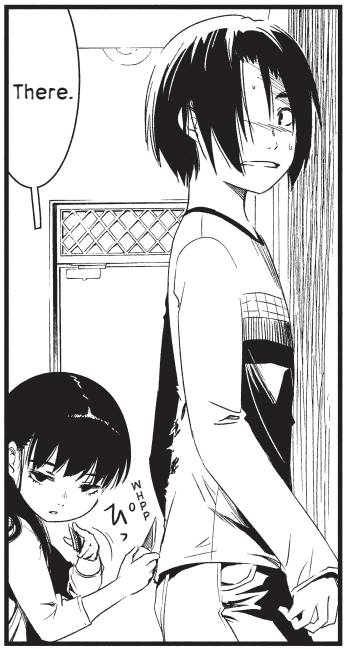
No.
SKRAPE


TMP
TMP


...The stairs?


Open it.
...

SLIDE


There.
WHOP

Go inside.
A closet...?
...So she wants me to take something out of here?
...Okay.
What should I get?

SLAAAM
Huh ...?
BTAMM

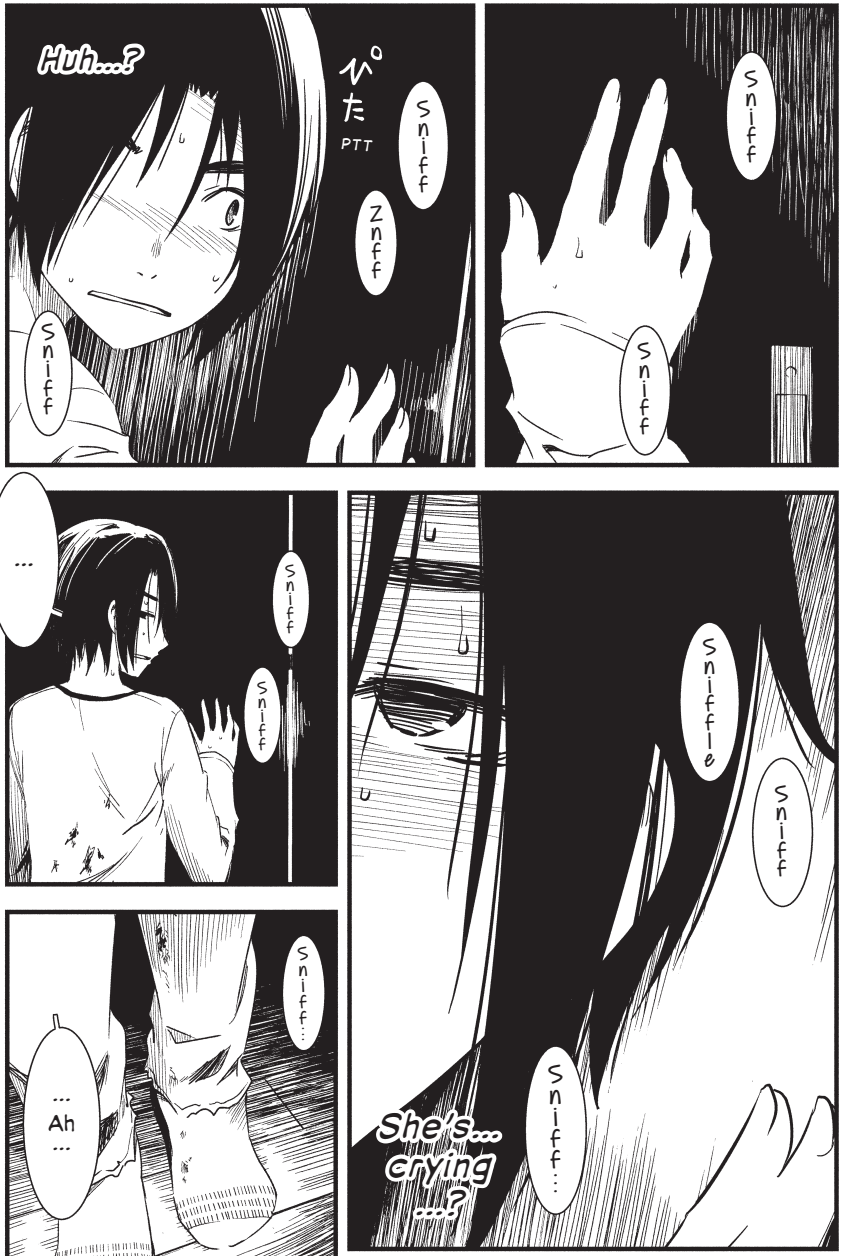
Hold on...
GACHAK
A lock? A key?
Gachak ?

What... did you do...?!
TUG
TUG
Hello ...?
Can you hear me ?!
RATTLE
RATTLE
Hey !
RATTLE
... You
saw me.

So I have to do this.
I have to lock you away and take you in.

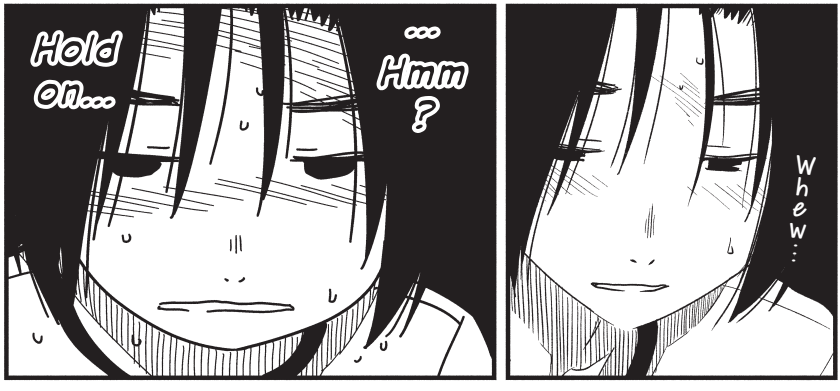
"Take me in" ?
...
Because you might tell them.
Tell them who I really am.
TUG
...
H...

YANK
YANK
YOU BROUGHT ME HERE TO LOCK ME UP?!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING ?!
TO "TAKE ME IN"?!
ARE YOU OUTTA YOUR MIND OR SOME-THING ...?!
HEY, KNOCK THIS OFF RIGHT NOW !!
YANK
HEY!!
STOP MESSING AROUND
AND LET ME OUT OF HERE RIGHT N...
Sniff
...
Sniff...

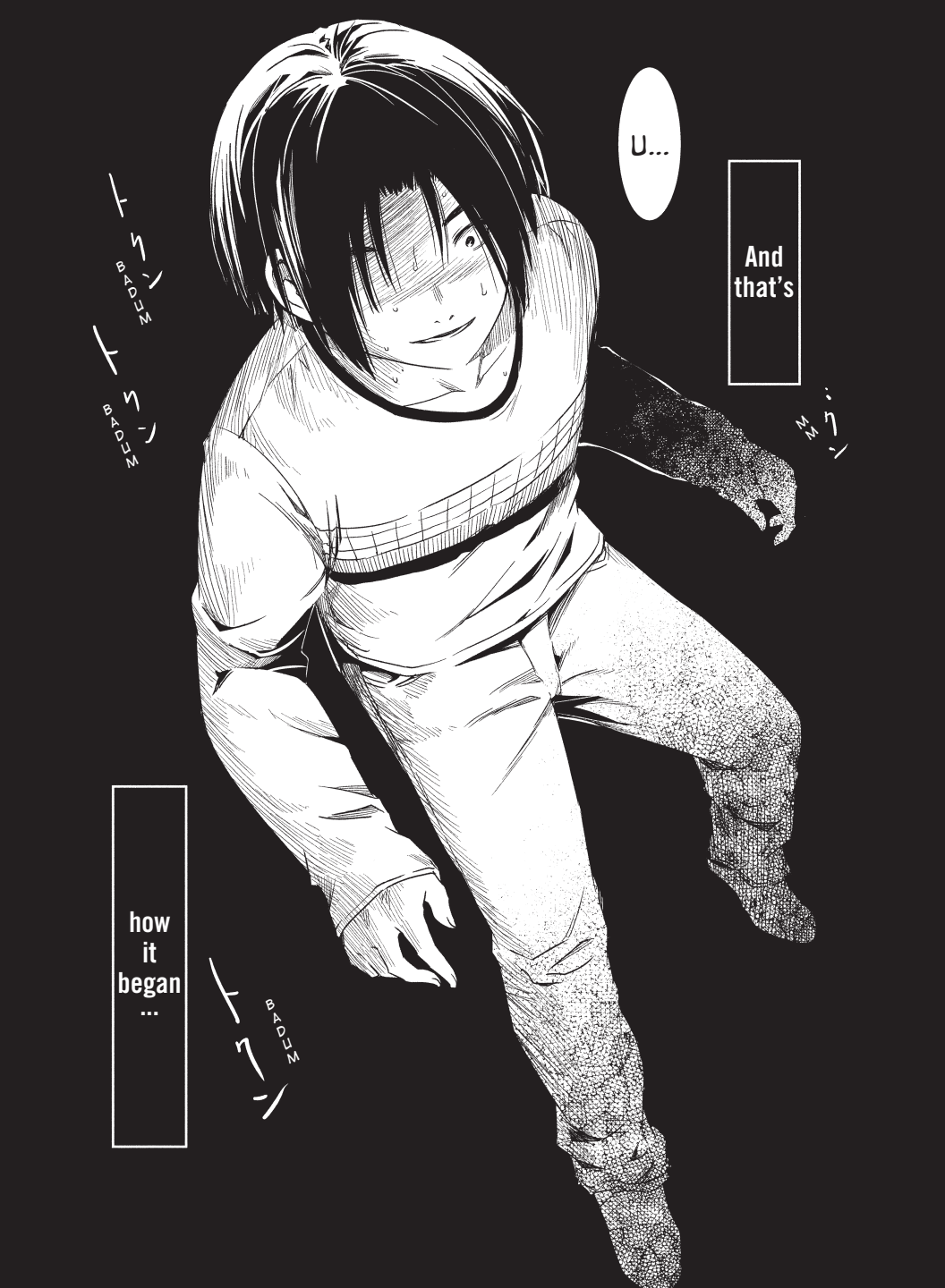

Sniff
Sniff
Huh...?
ぴた
PTT
Sniff
Znff
Sniff
...
Sniff
Sniff
Sniffle
Sniff
She's... crying ...?
Sniff...
... Ah ...
Sniff...

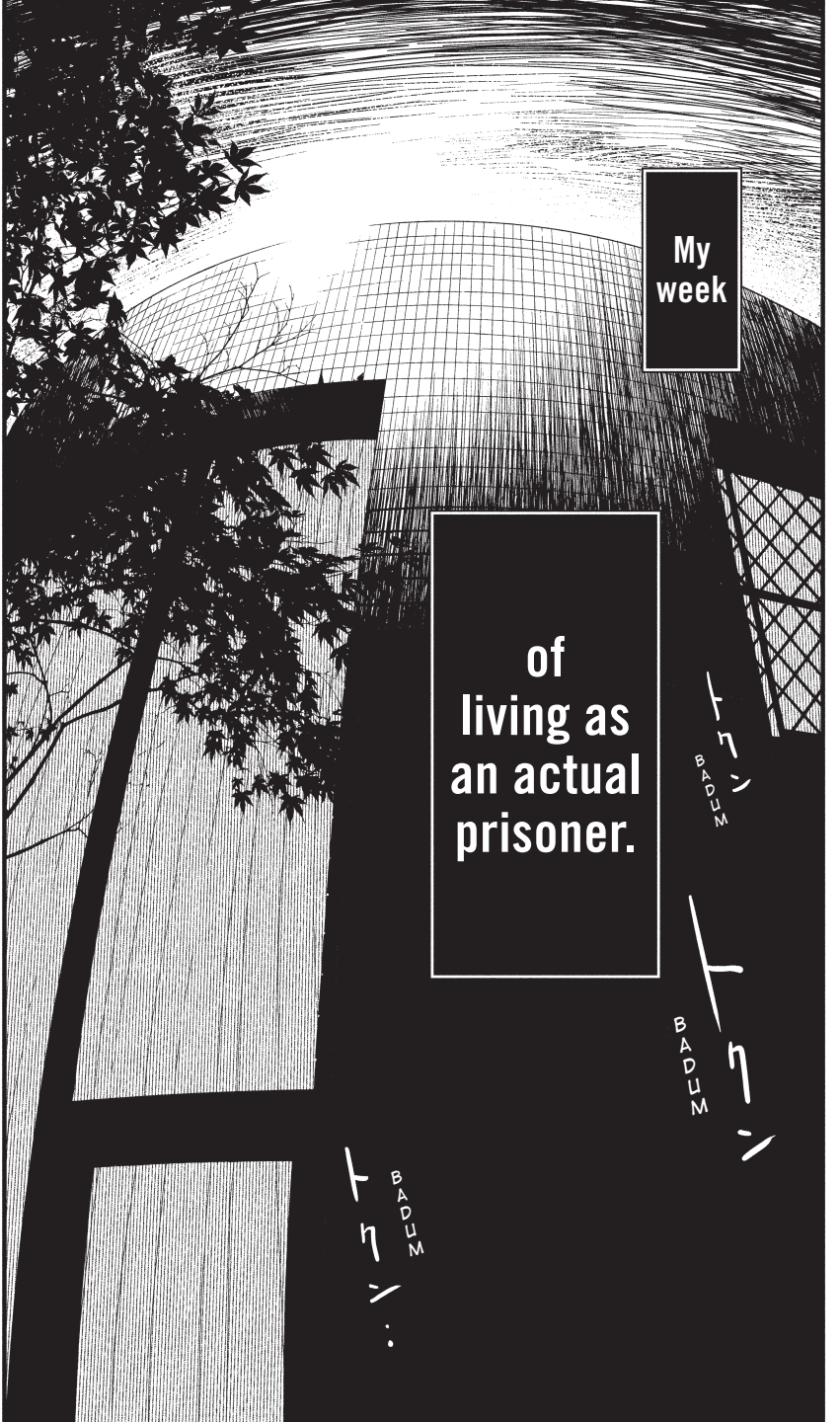
Hey, no... I...
Sniff
Sniffle
Well ...
I don't get what's going on, so...
You know, uhm ...
That's why...
I'm sorry for... yelling ...
She has me imprisoned... Why am I apologizing to her...?
HUMPH
...
...
Did she stop crying ...?

I forgive you.
...All right.


Hold on...
... Hmm?
Whew...

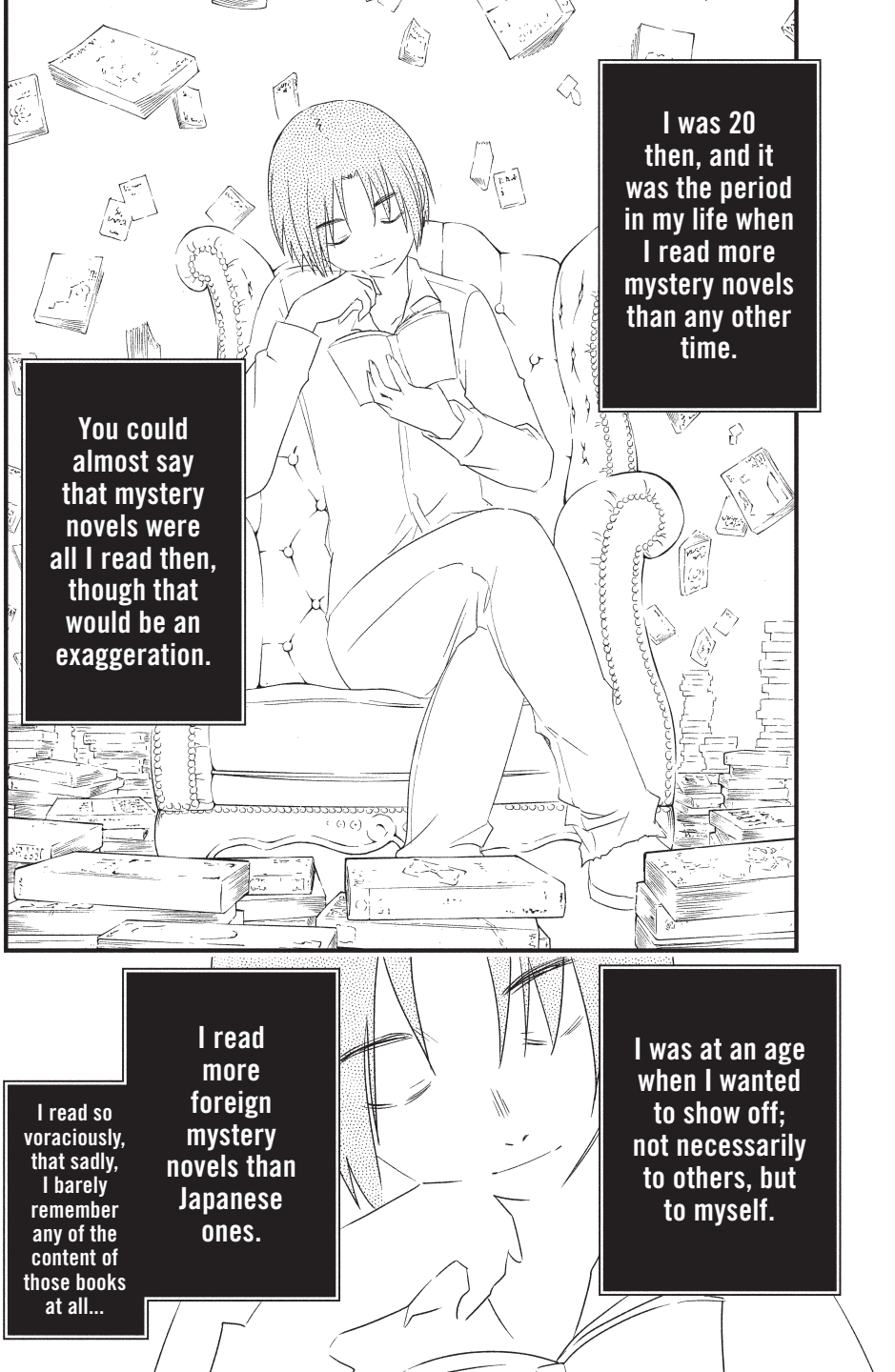
Wait... what? No... Does that mean ...
Hey ...
BLUSH
かぁ
Uhm ...
Was she pretending to cry just now...?! So she was testing me...?!?
Hey, listen... Hold on...
THP
と
THP
と
THP
と
!
Huh ?
Foot-steps ...?!
Hey ...
KNOCK
コン
You're... still there, aren't you...?
KNOCK
コン
U...?!
KNOCK
コン
Say something, please...?
Say ...
じわ
PLIP...
some-thing ...


U...
And that's
how it began ...
トクン
BADUM
トクン
BADUM
トクン
BADUM


My week
of living as an actual prisoner.
トゥン
BADUM
トゥン
BADUM
トゥン
BADUM

2013.8

5


I was 20 then, and it was the period in my life when I read more mystery novels than any other time.
You could almost say that mystery novels were all I read then, though that would be an exaggeration.
I was at an age when I wanted to show off; not necessarily to others, but to myself.
I read more foreign mystery novels than Japanese ones.
I read so voraciously, that sadly, I barely remember any of the content of those books at all...

But a part of me would always sneer when I read such books.

You can't lock someone up that easily in real life, I'd think.

Unlike more direct methods, such as beating someone or poisoning them, it requires no physical strength,

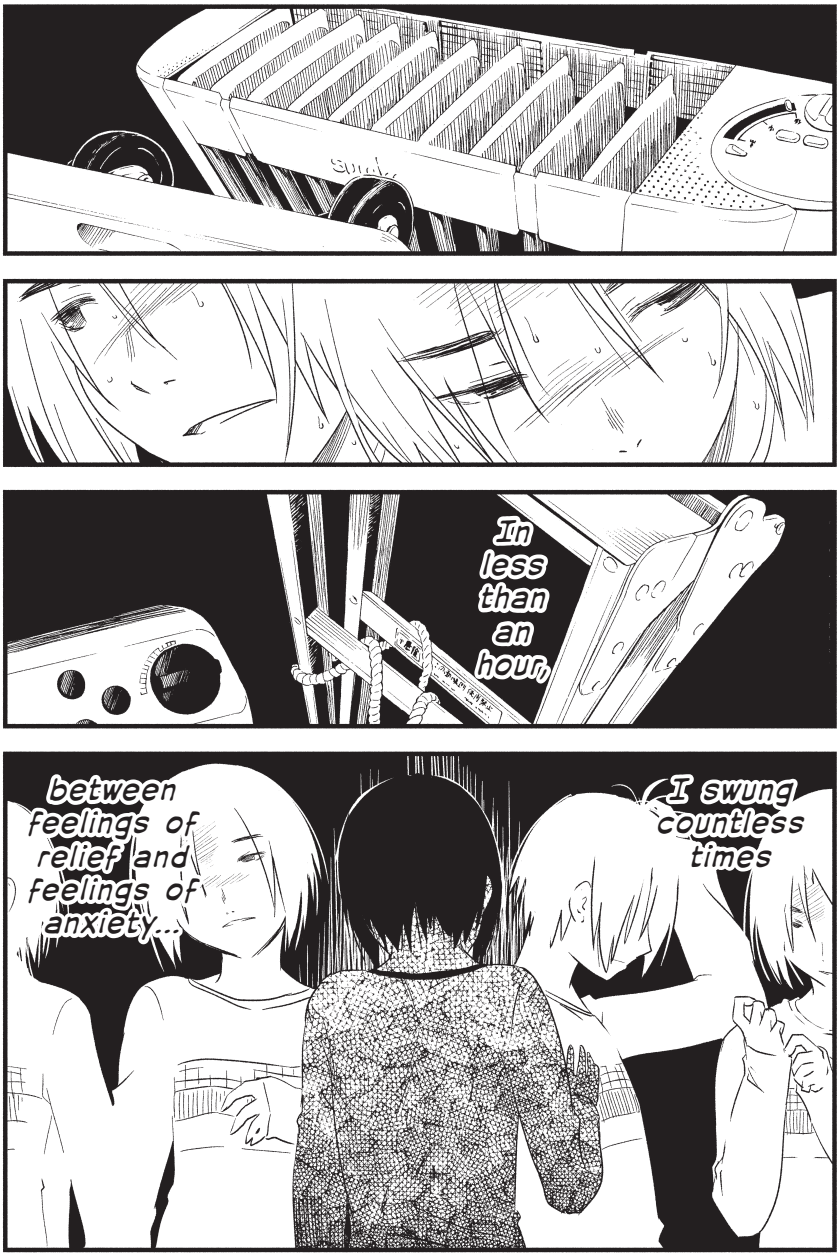
And it's also a method that leaves the killer with a lesser sense of guilt... at least, I think that's how I recall it being described.

In any case,

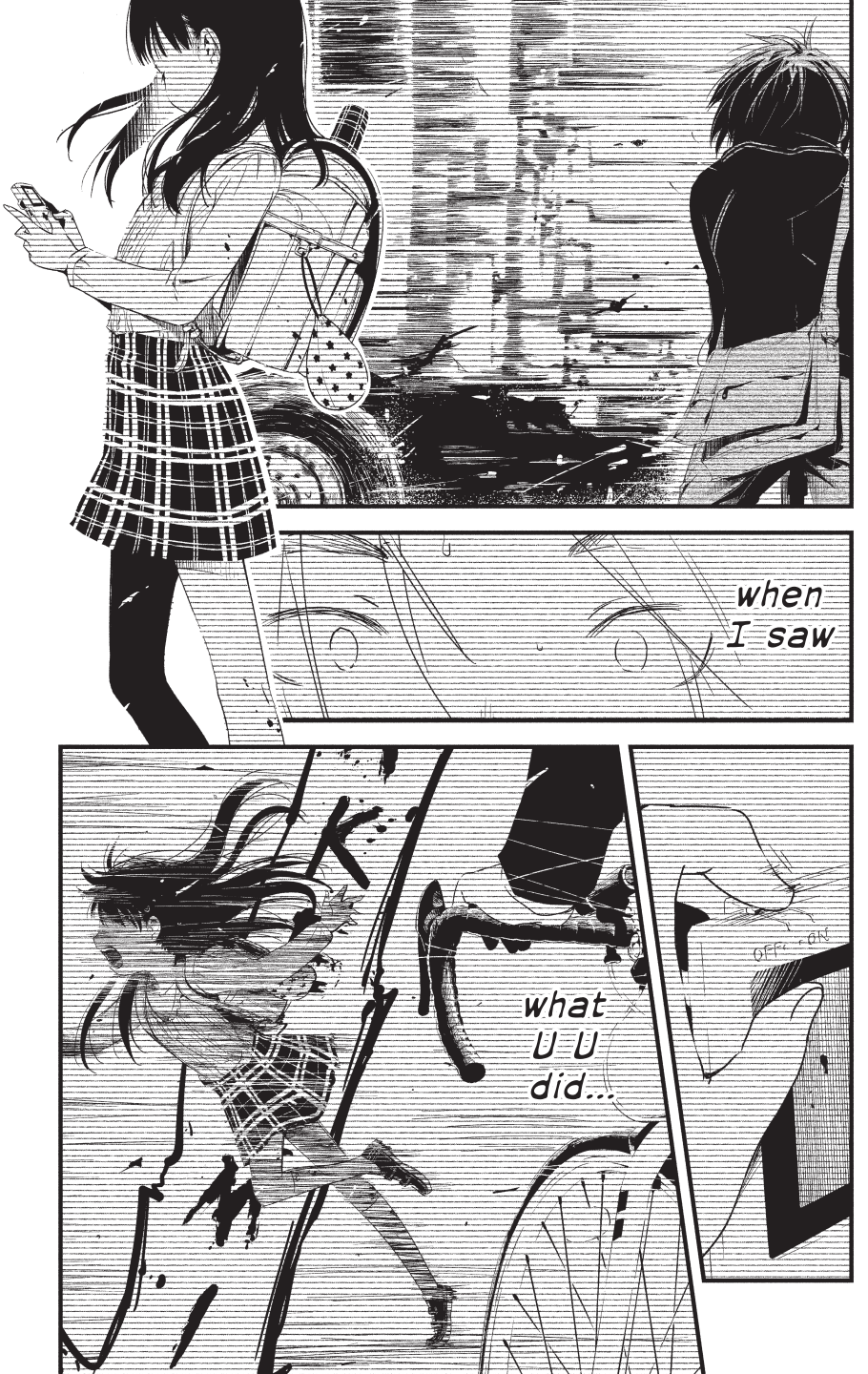
there's an oft-seen method of murder in the world of mystery novels:

imprisoning the victim in a locked room—a safe, for example—until they suffocated.

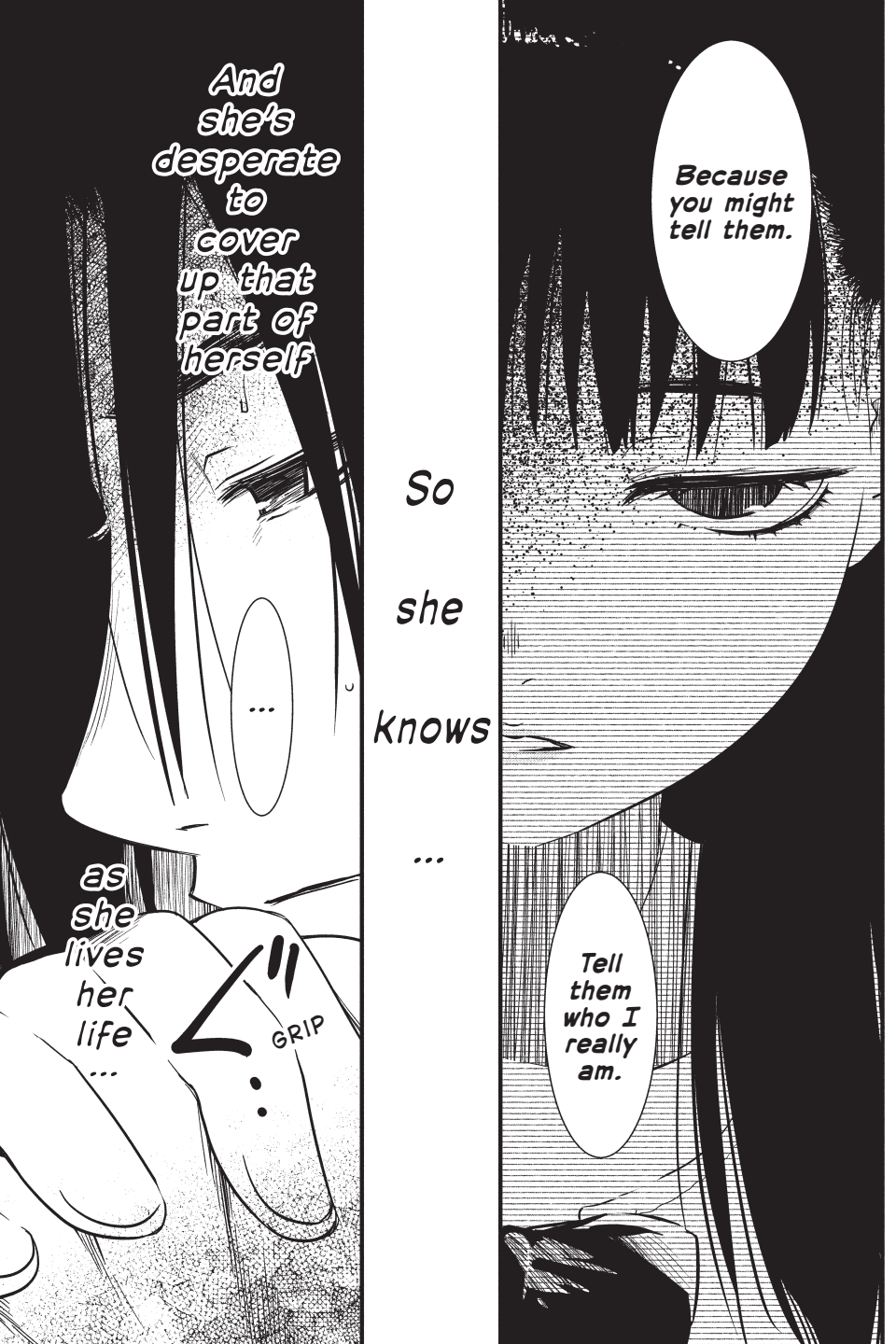
And now
監禁
Hour 1
I found myself getting locked up just that easily.
It almost felt like I was reaping what I'd sown.
...
of imprisonment.
一時間。

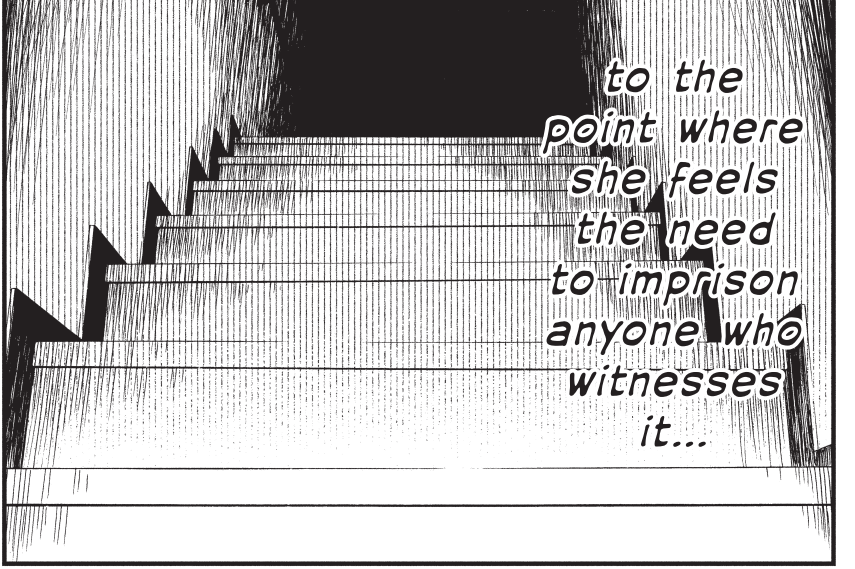

In less than an hour,
between feelings of relief and feelings of anxiety...
I swung countless times

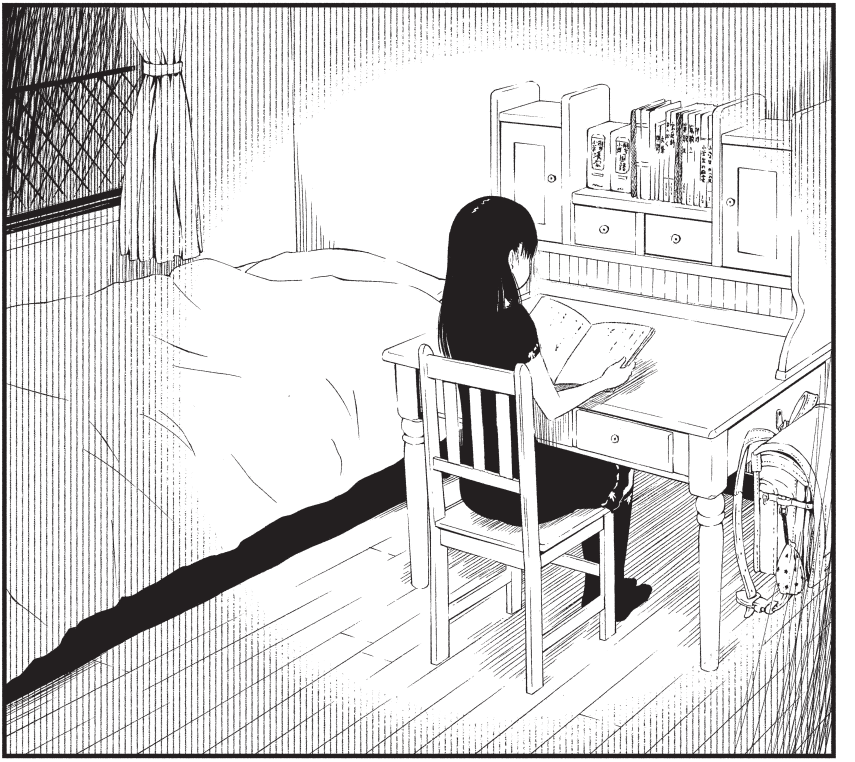
WHLINK
...
...Yep.
Looks like U isn't coming back here.
じ…
PEEK
That day...
ZHFF
ZHFF


when
I saw
what
U U
did...
OFFICE

She had realized.
she saw me, too.
ZHFF
ズ…
She knew I had seen her for who she really is.
GASP
は…
…
Oh.
…I guess that's what's happened here.
That's why she decided to silence me this way.


Because you might tell them.
Tell them who I really am.
So she knows ...
And she's desperate to cover up that part of herself
...
as she lives her life ...
GRIP

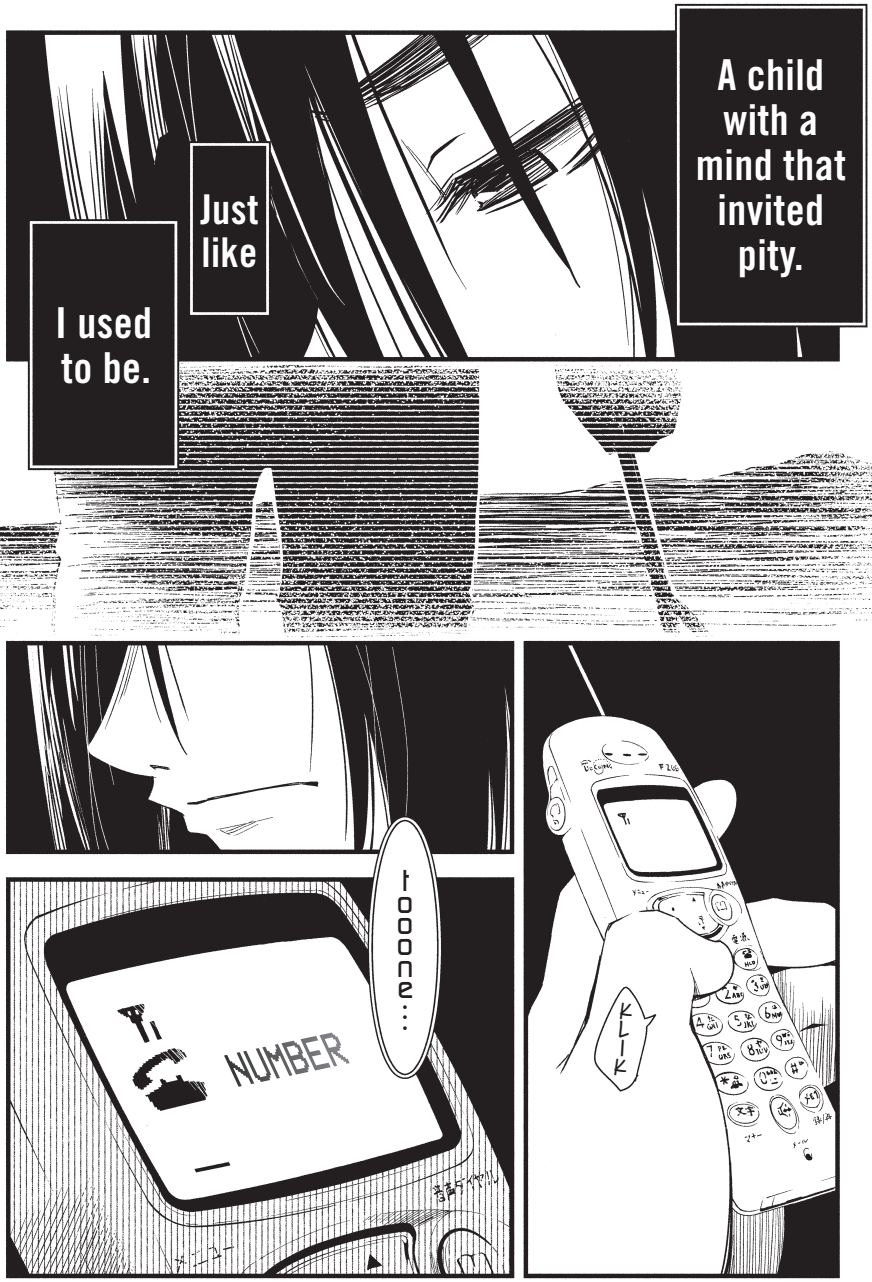

to the
point where
she feels
the need
to imprison
anyone who
witnesses
it...

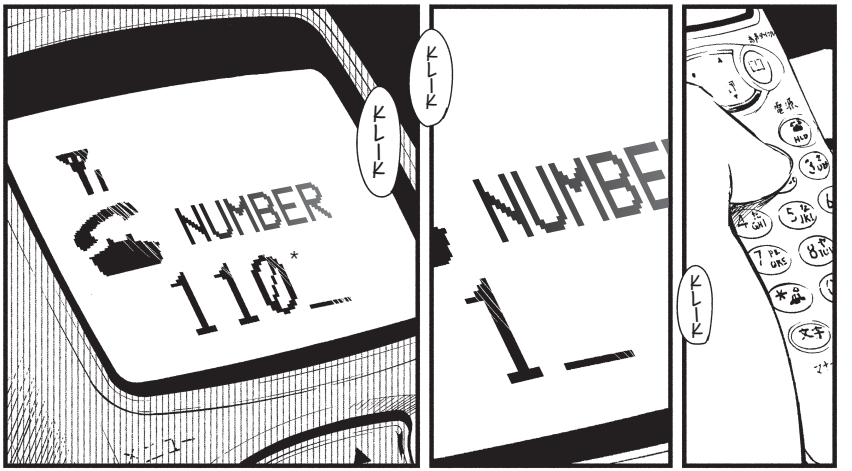


SHKK
But ...
RUSTLE
As long as I have this thing,
it's almost certain that I can stage an escape.

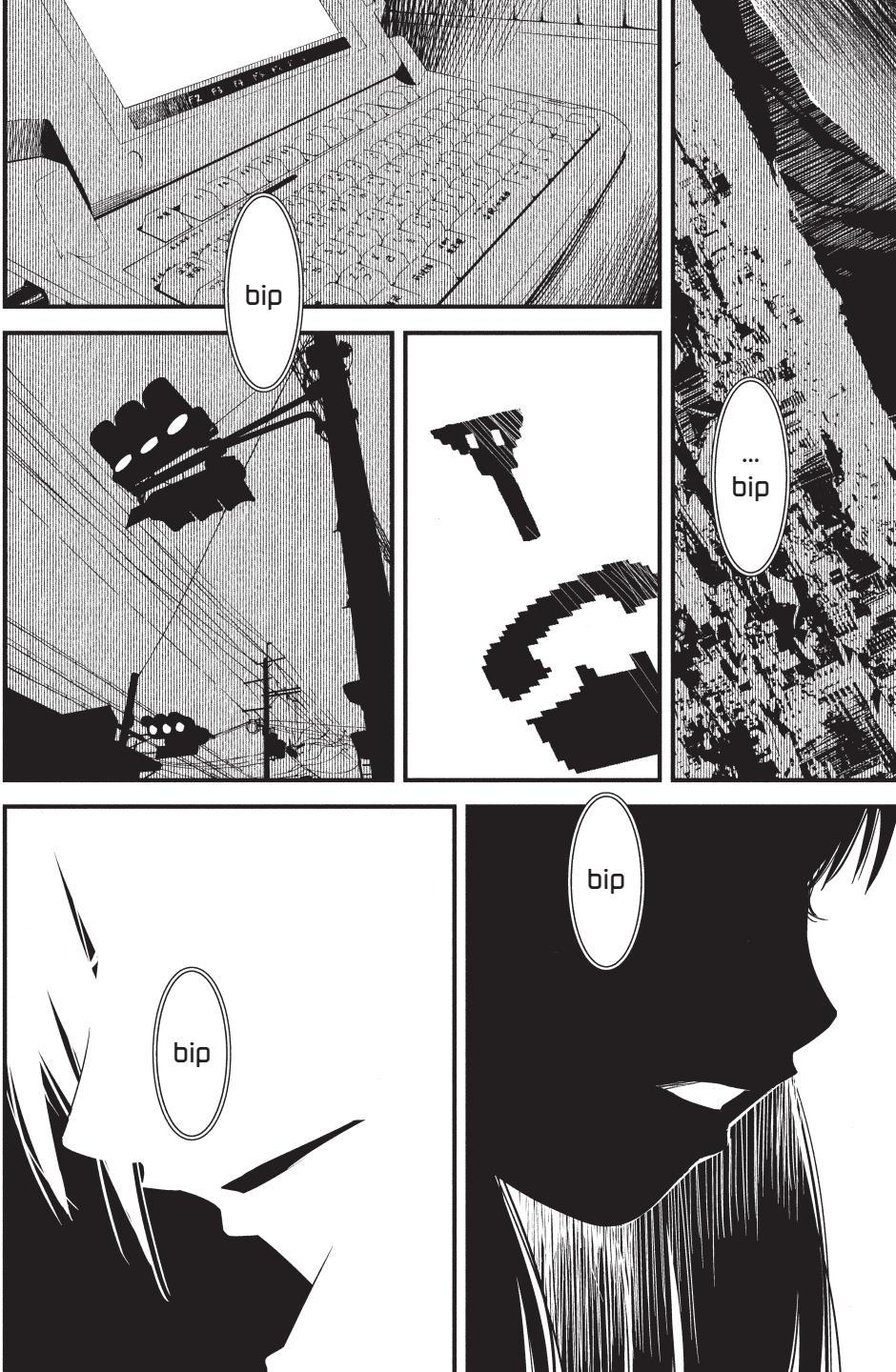
The shallow thinking of a child...
It's fundamentally impossible for a grade schooler to kidnap someone.
This story isn't going to go like some piece of pulp fiction, or what is now known as a "light novel."
SWKK

U was by no means a beast,
a girl with a messed-up head.
nor was she a monster.
She was just

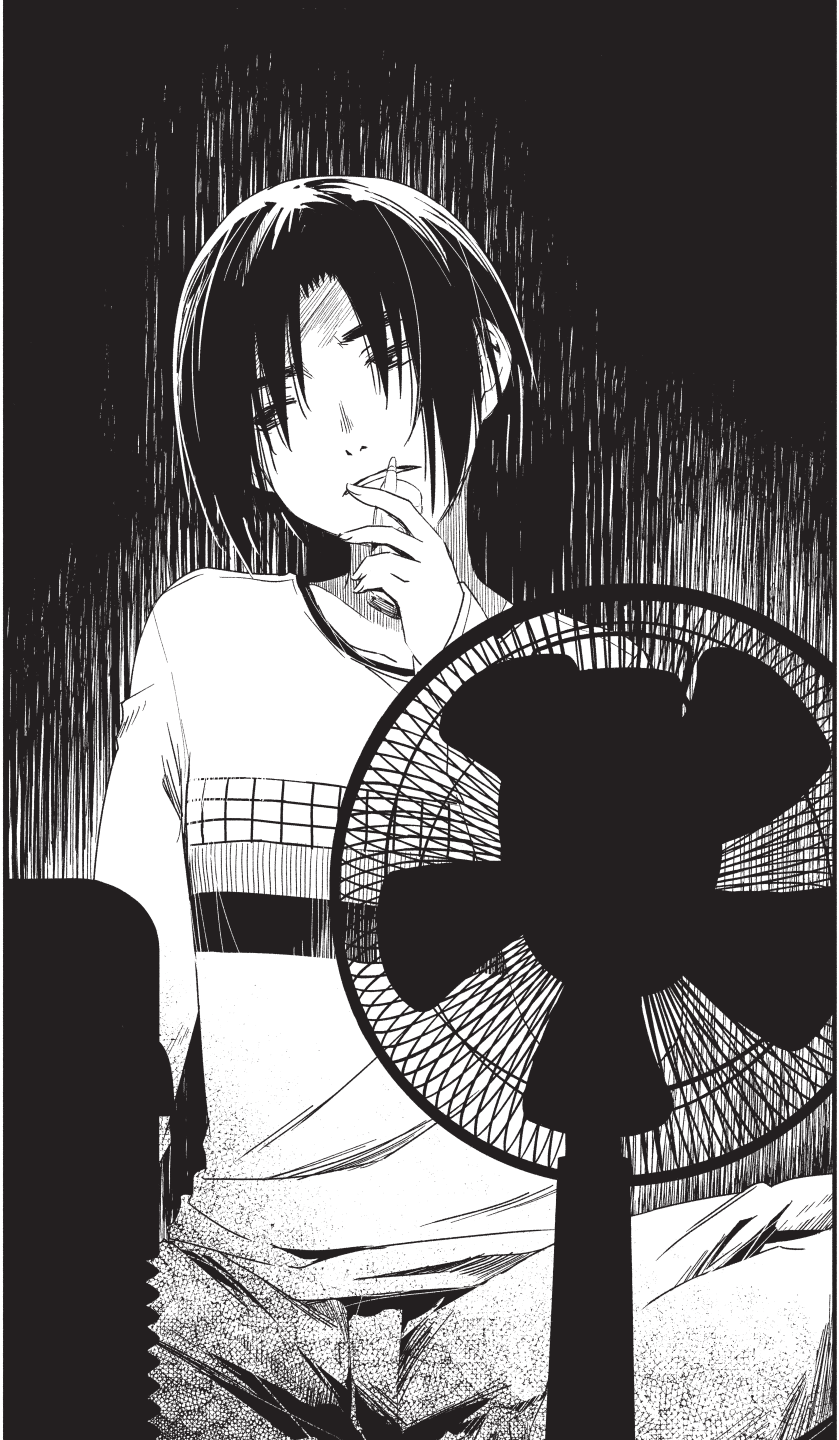

A child with a mind that invited pity.
Just like
I used to be.
NUMBER
toooone…
KLIK

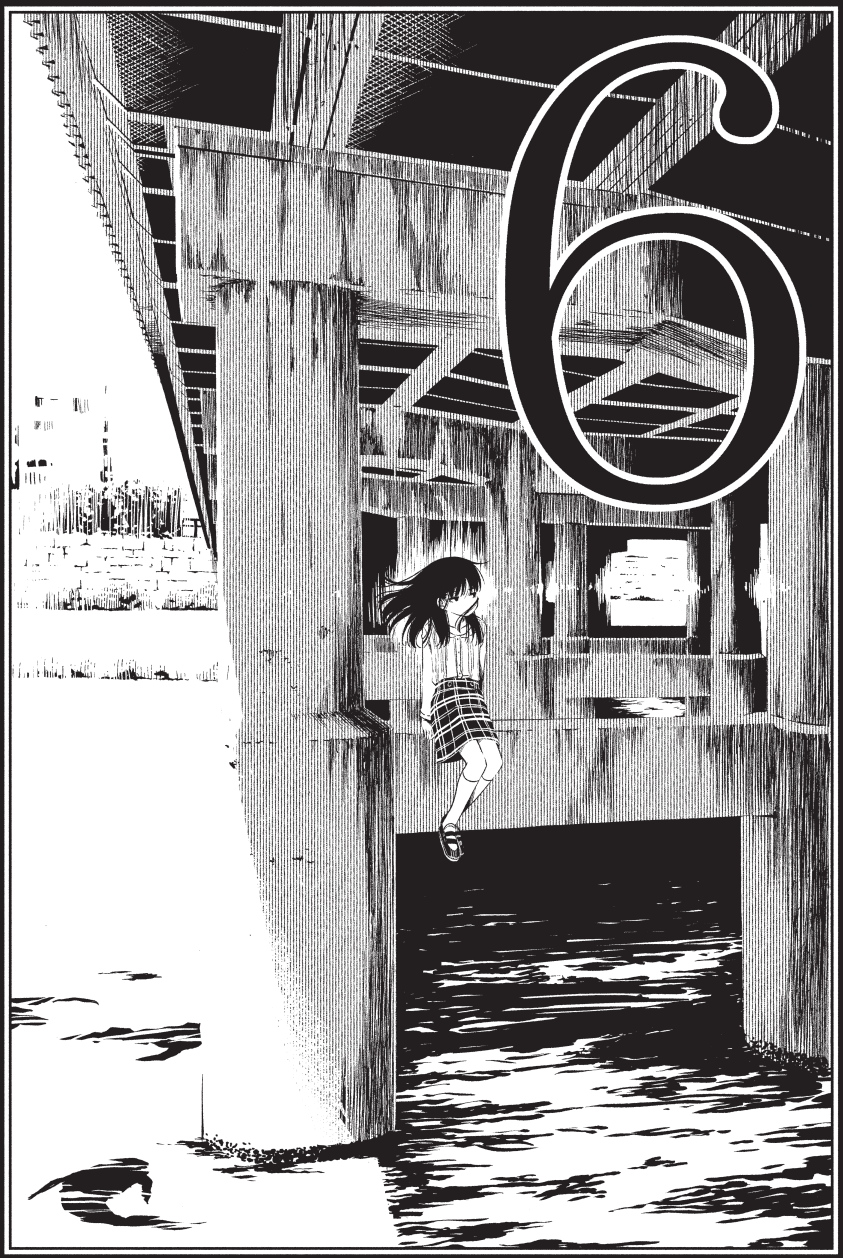


*110 (Police)

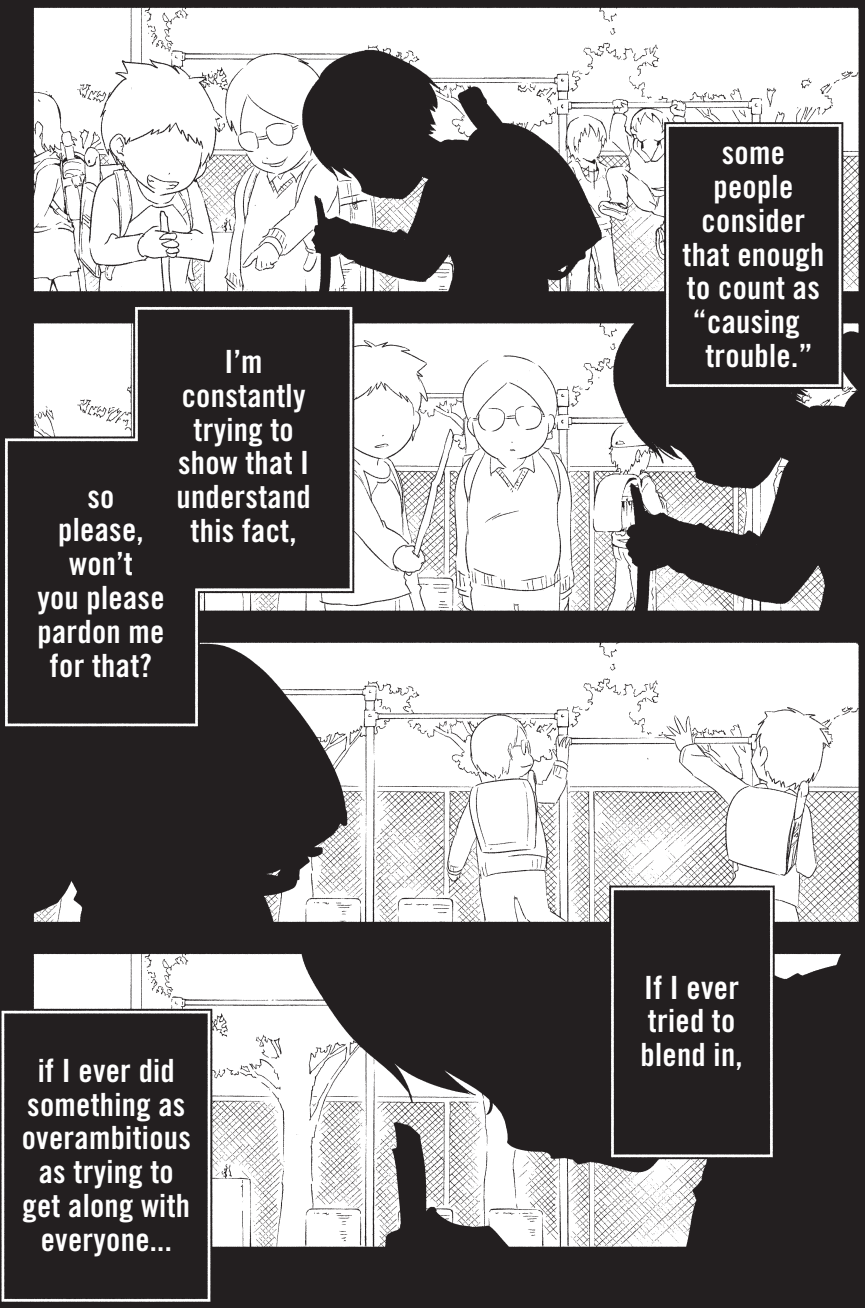

bip
...
bip
bip
bip

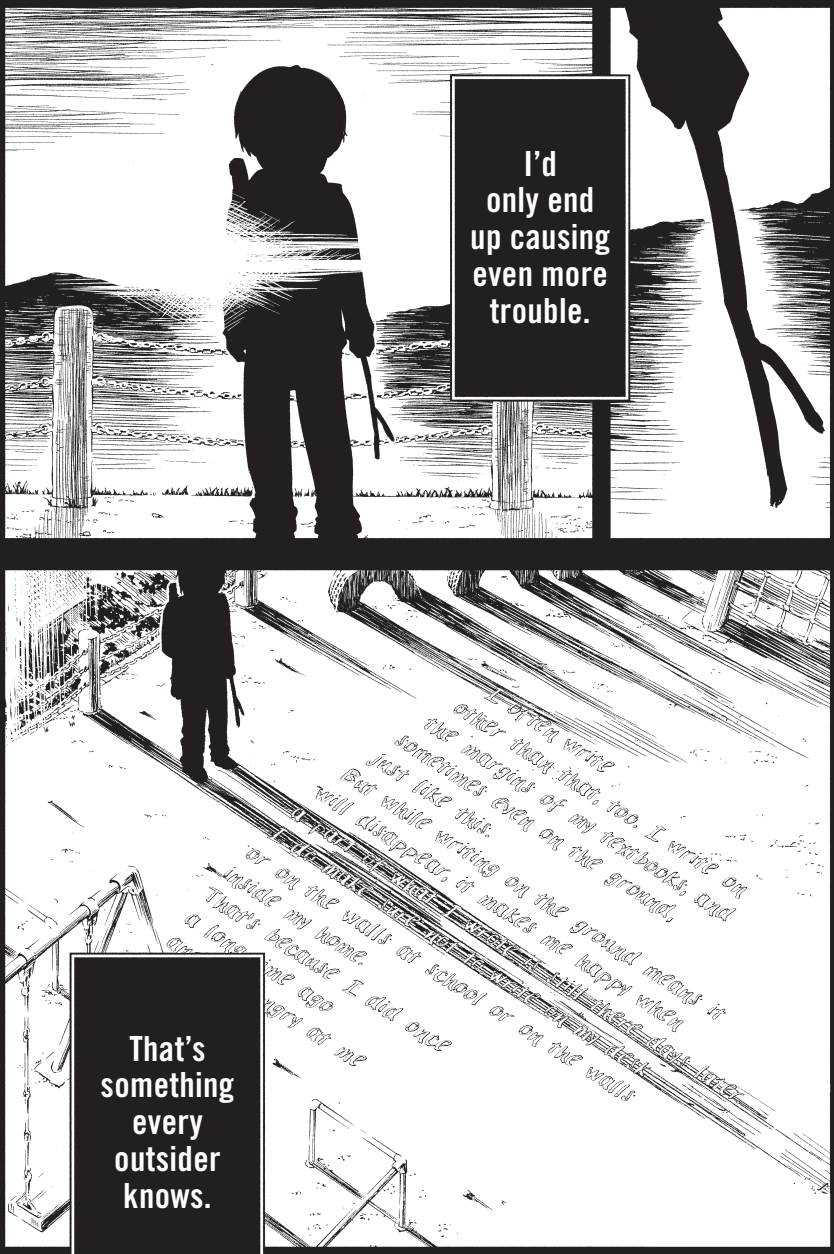
KLIK
CALL ENDED

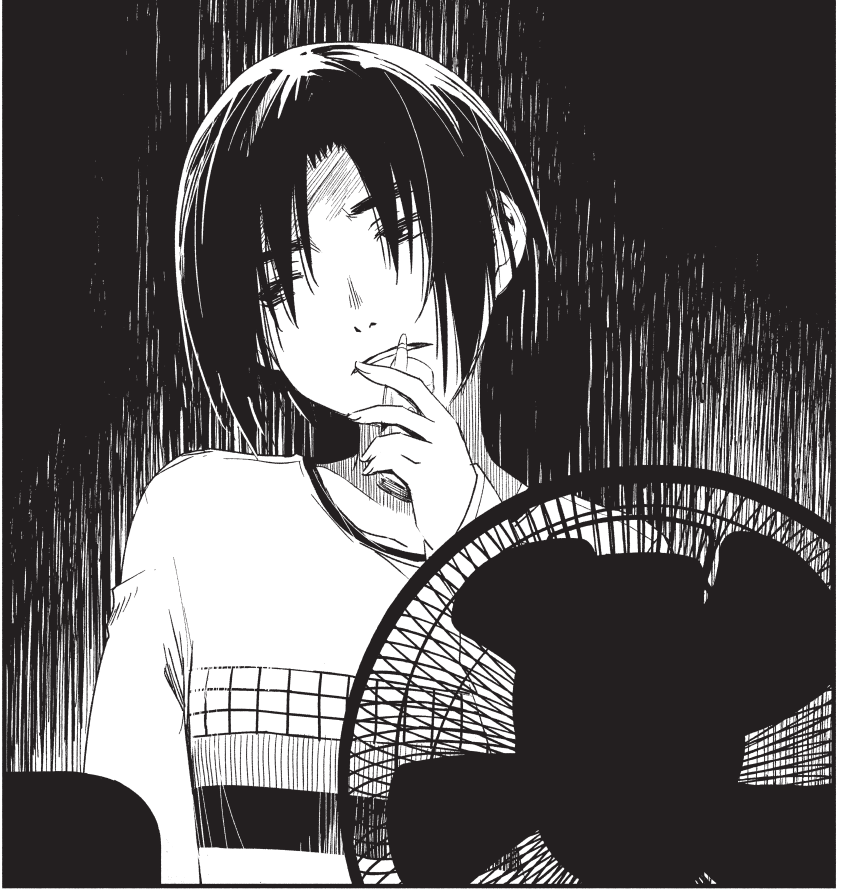



6

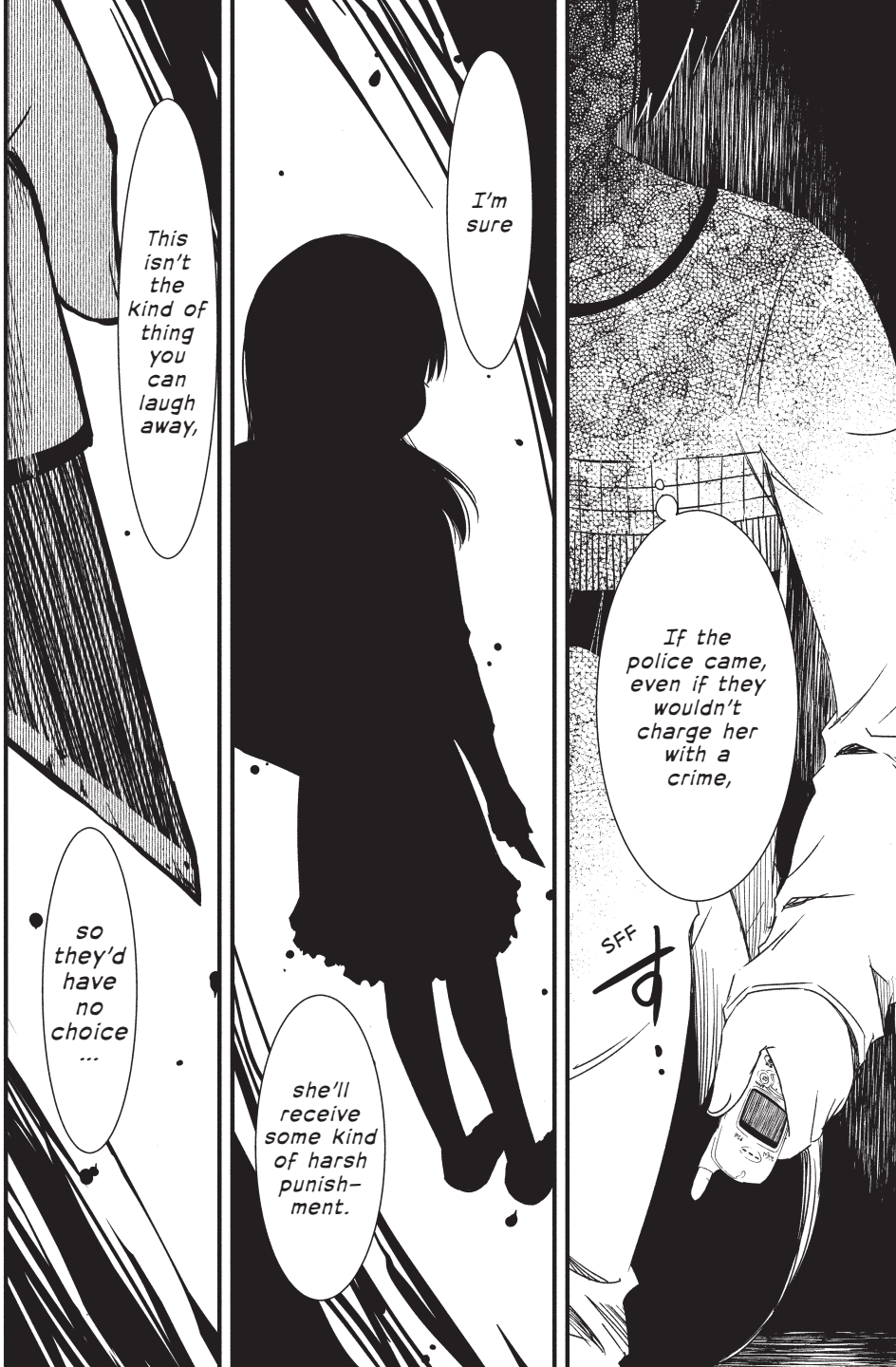
So long as you don't cause trouble to others,
supposedly, you'll be allowed to behave however you want.
as far as society's concerned,
went out with my
other. I thought
ring PE class
But of course,
After school
if you're an outsider who's unable to blend in...


some people consider that enough to count as "causing trouble."
I'm constantly trying to show that I understand this fact,
so please, won't you please pardon me for that?
If I ever tried to blend in,
if I ever did something as overambitious as trying to get along with everyone...


I'd only end up causing even more trouble.
I often write other than that, too. I write on the margins of my textbooks, and sometimes even on the ground, just like that.
But while writing on the ground means it will disappear, it makes me happy when or on the walls at school or on the walls inside my home.
That's because I did once a long time ago
That's something every outsider knows.



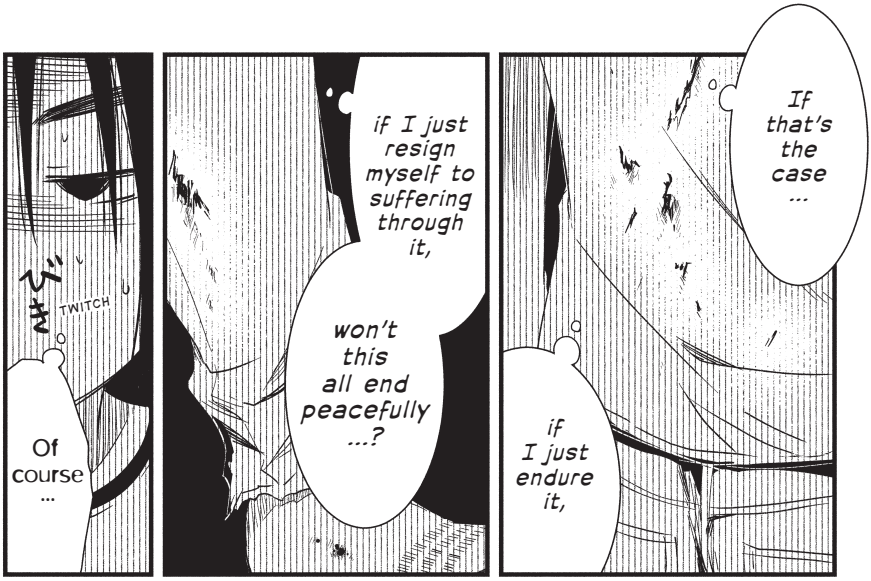
Is...
Is calling the police here really the best choice?
Is that my only option ...?

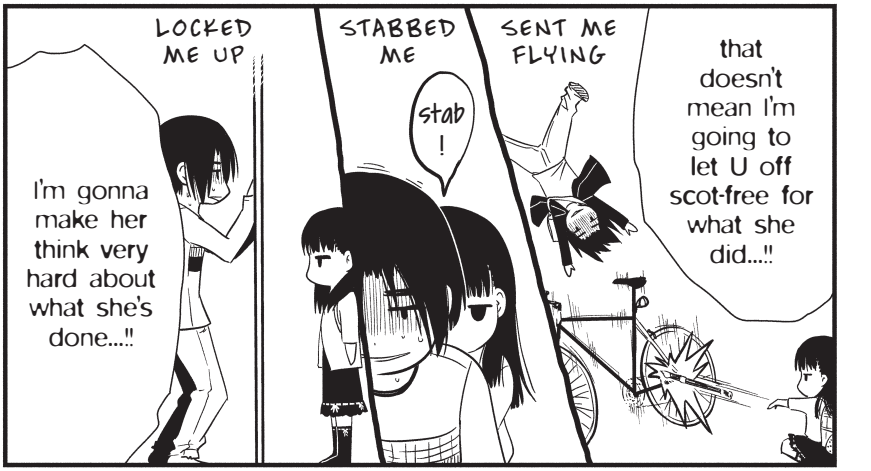

If the police came, even if they wouldn't charge her with a crime,
SFF
I'm sure
she'll receive some kind of harsh punish-ment.
This isn't the kind of thing you can laugh away,
so they'd have no choice ...

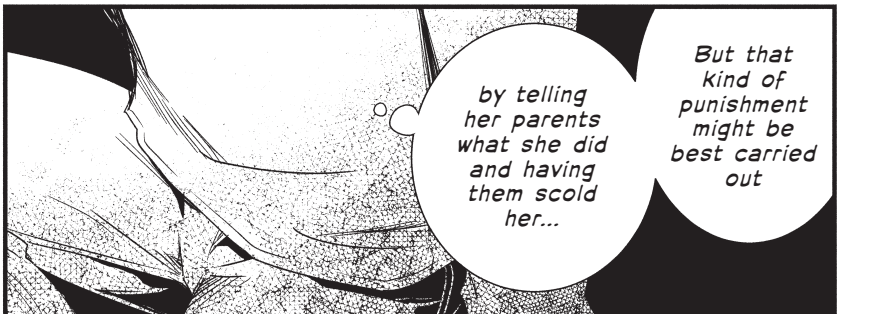
I knew very well how society viewed children like her.
But would that really lead to her becoming reformed?
I couldn't help but feel worried that it would only
But ...
I knew all too
well.
further warp her as a person.

She wasn't a monster,
but there was a strong possibility that it would turn her into one...
Really, the only option for a kid like her was to become a writer or something.

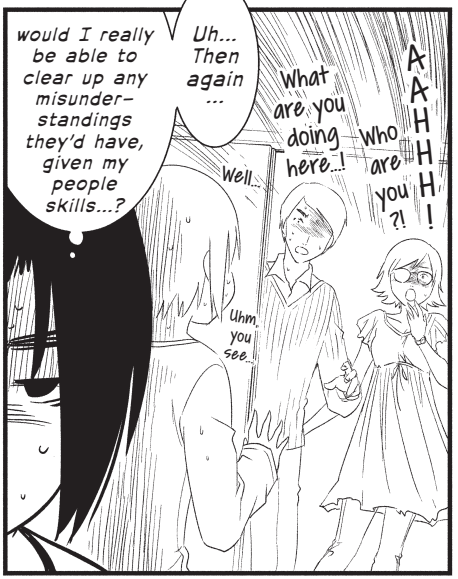
Just as I was aspiring to become an author back then.

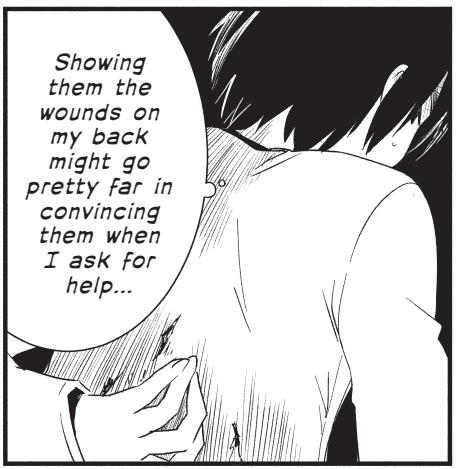

If that's the case ...
if I just endure it,
if I just resign myself to suffering through it,
won't this all end peacefully ...?
TWITCH
Of course ...


LOCKED ME UP
I'm gonna make her think very hard about what she's done....!!
STABBED ME
stab !
SENT ME FLYING
that doesn't mean I'm going to let U off scot-free for what she did...!!


But that kind of punishment might be best carried out
by telling her parents what she did and having them scold her...

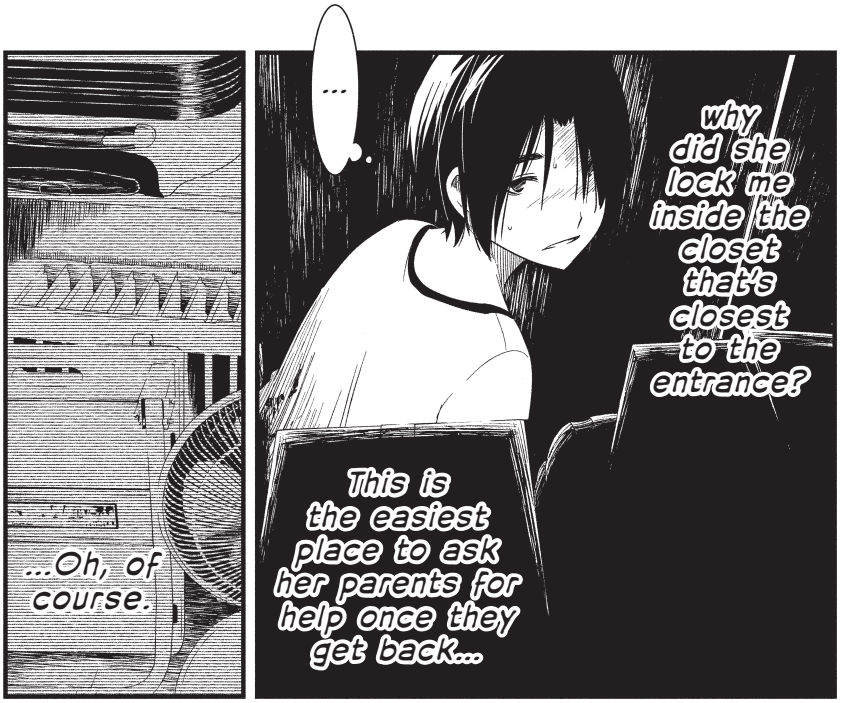
I might start to be known as the college student who got abducted by an elementary school kid.

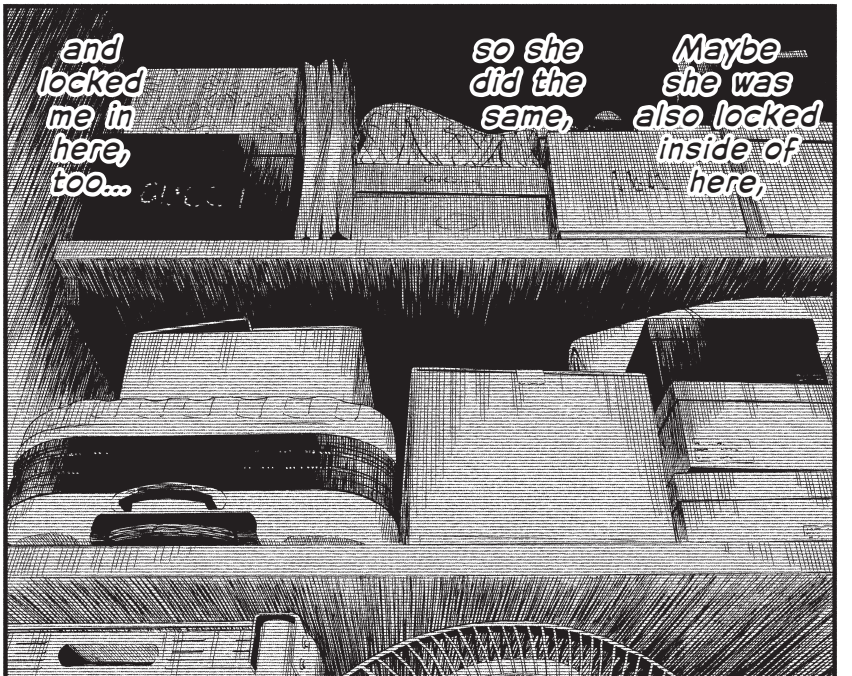

would I really be able to clear up any misunder-standings they'd have, given my people skills...?
Uh... Then again ...
Well...
What are you doing here...!
Uhm, you see...
Who are you?!
AAHHH!

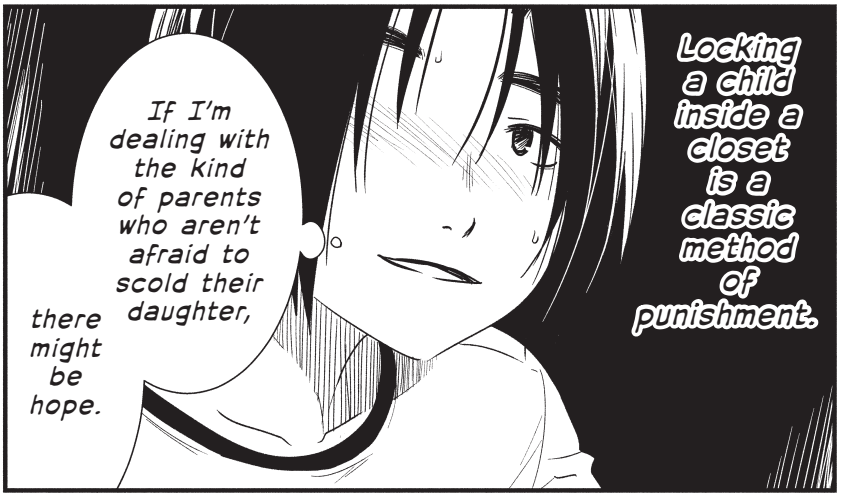

Showing them the wounds on my back might go pretty far in convincing them when I ask for help...

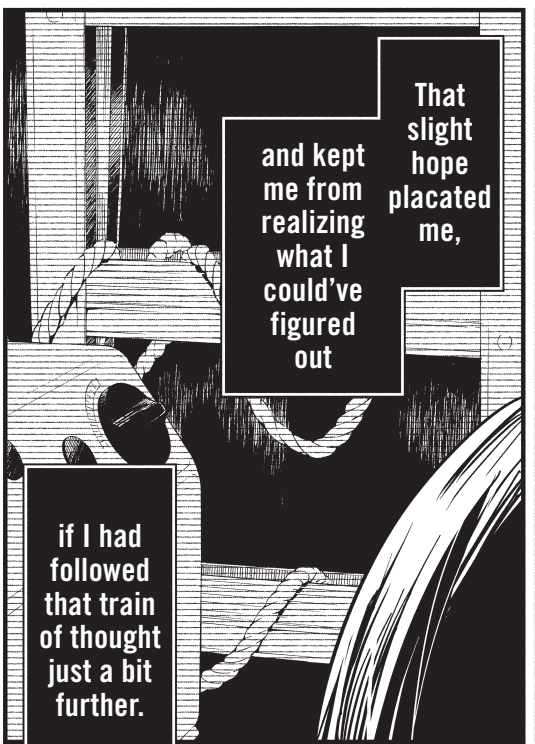
...
In any case,

But I'm in luck. From here,
I'll be able to tell right away when her parents come home.

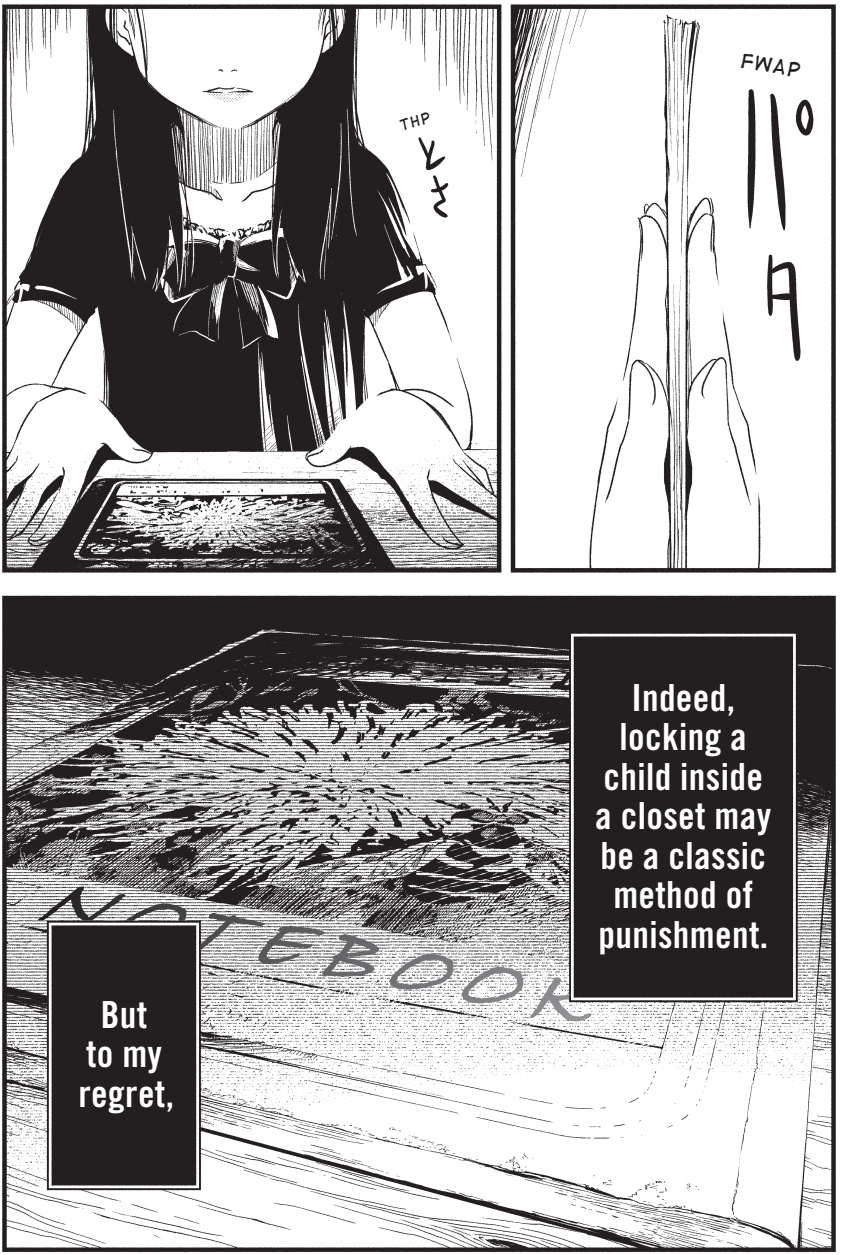

...
why did she lock me inside the closet that's closest to the entrance?
This is the easiest place to ask her parents for help once they get back...
...Oh, of course.

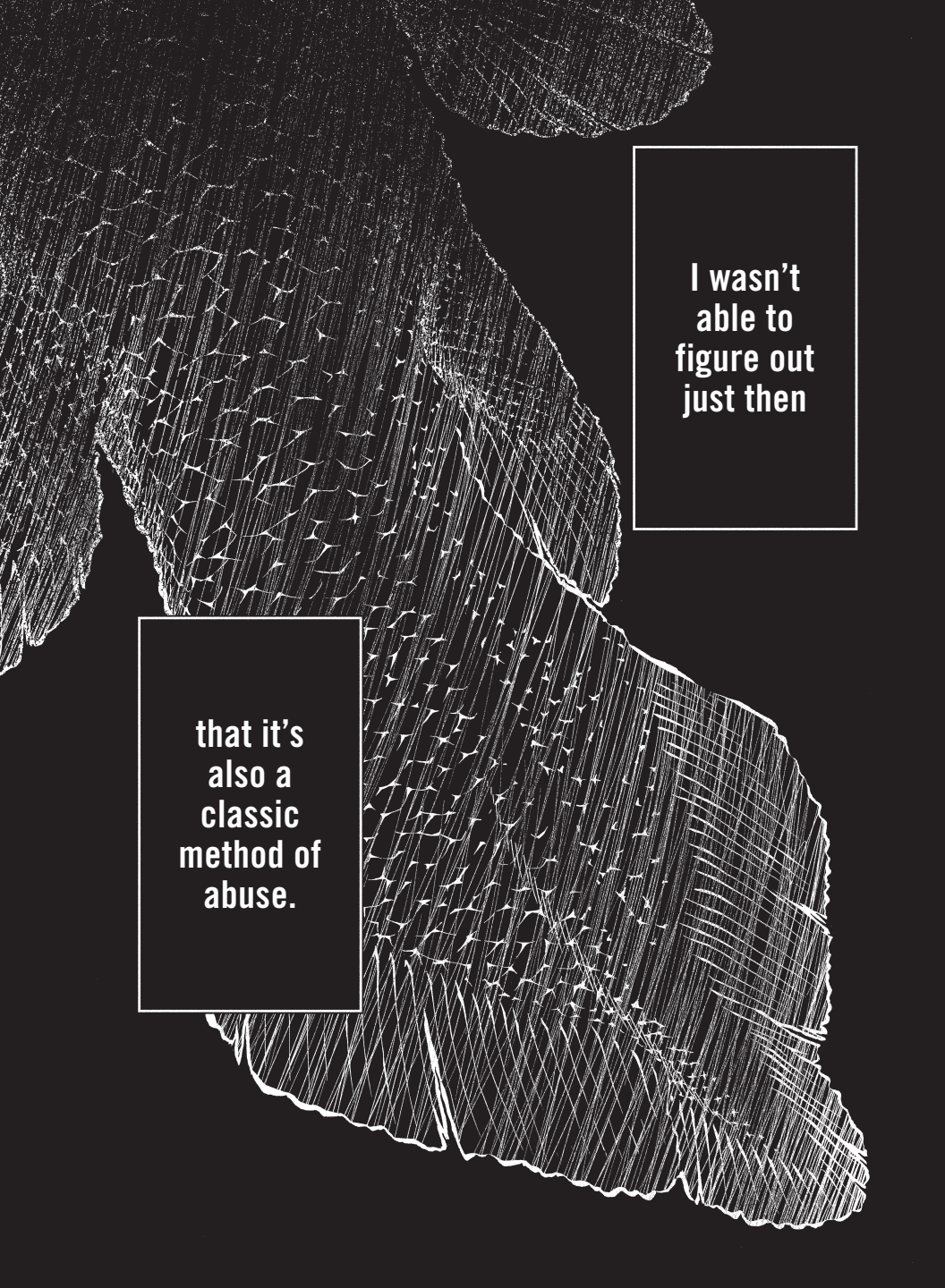

Maybe she was also locked inside of here,
so she did the same,
and locked me in here, too...


Locking a child inside a closet is a classic method of punishment.
If I'm dealing with the kind of parents who aren't afraid to scold their daughter,
there might be hope.


That slight hope placated me,
and kept me from realizing what I could've figured out
if I had followed that train of thought just a bit further.

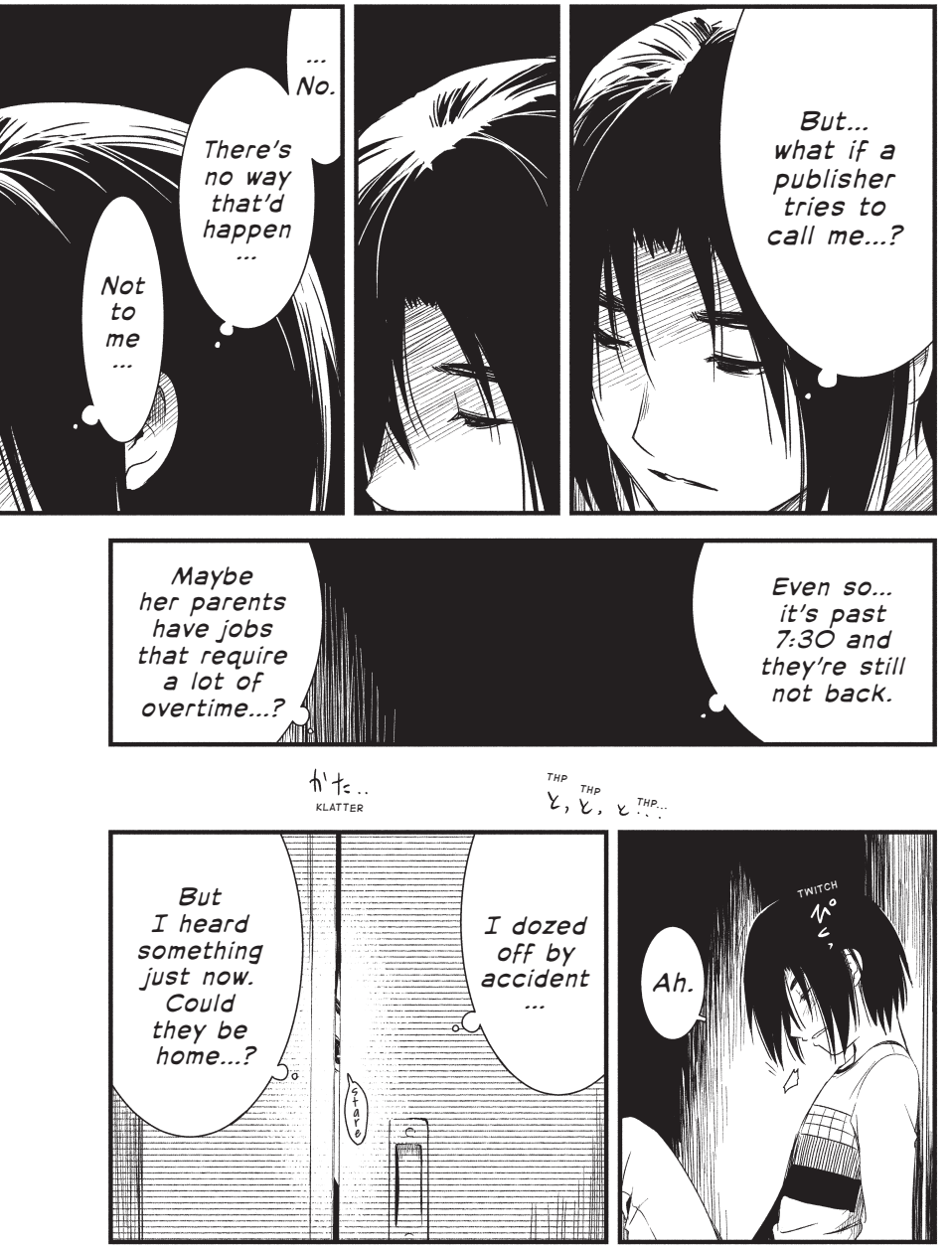
If I just politely explain everything that happened,
they should understand.

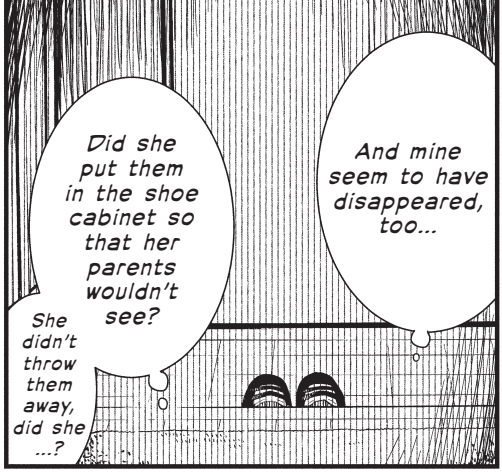

THP
FWAP
Indeed, locking a child inside a closet may be a classic method of punishment.
But to my regret,

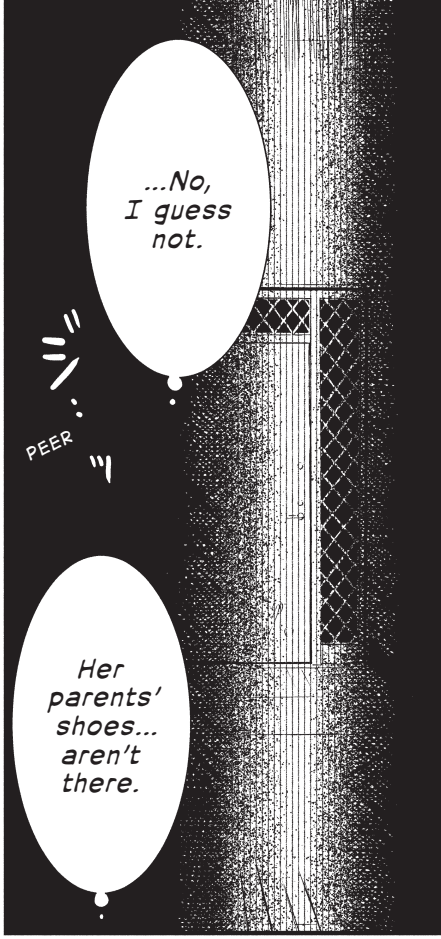

I wasn't able to figure out just then
that it's also a classic method of abuse.

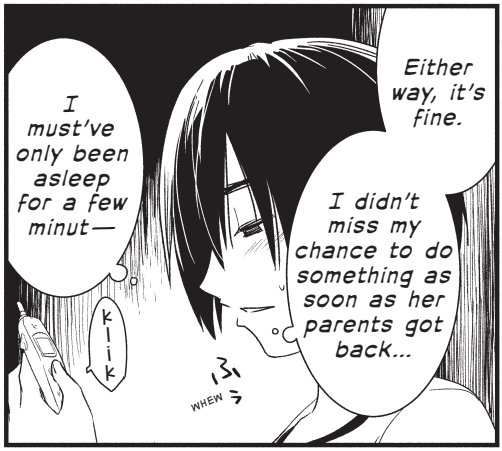
7

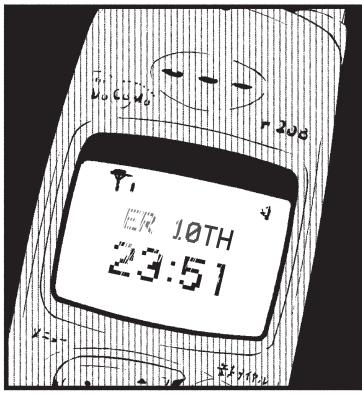
GLOOM
ぼや
My eyes are
starting to get used to the dark...
But... I shouldn't do anything unnecessary. I just have to sit here and wait for her parents to come back...
カチ
CLICK
That's all I need to do for this to be resolved...
I should turn my phone off to save the battery.
ER 10TH
19:32


...
No.
There's no way that'd happen ...
Not to me ...
But... what if a publisher tries to call me...?
Even so... it's past 7:30 and they're still not back.
Maybe her parents have jobs that require a lot of overtime...?
KLATTER
THP
THP
THP...
I dozed off by accident ...
But I heard something just now. Could they be home...?
TWITCH
Ah.

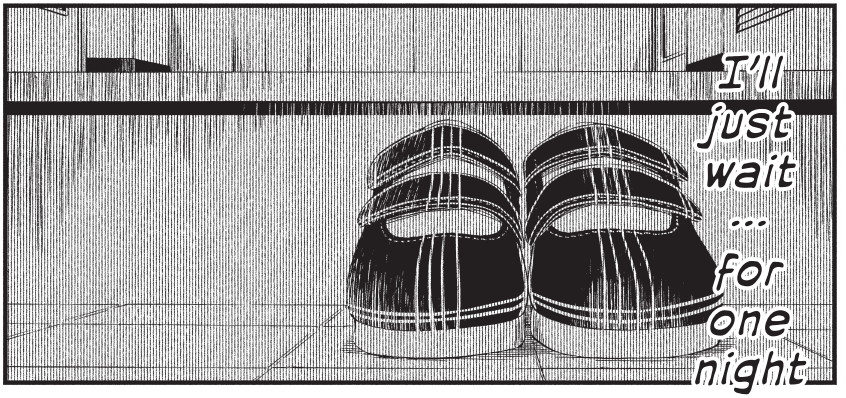

Did she put them in the shoe cabinet so that her parents wouldn't see?
She didn't throw them away, did she ...?
And mine seem to have disappeared, too...

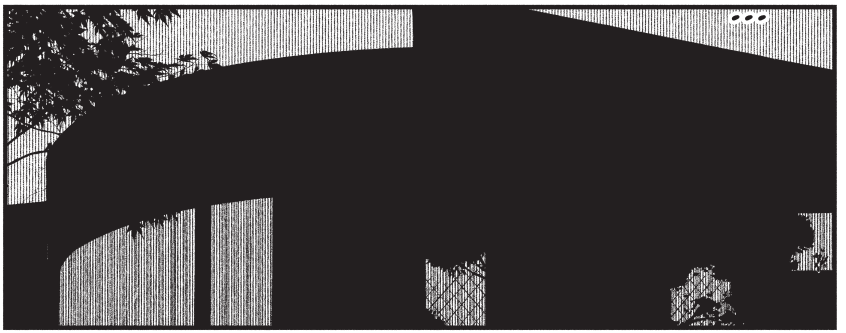

...No, I guess not.
PEER
Her parents' shoes... aren't there.


I must've only been asleep for a few minut—
klik
Either way, it's fine.
I didn't miss my chance to do something as soon as her parents got back...
WHEW


ER 10TH
23:51

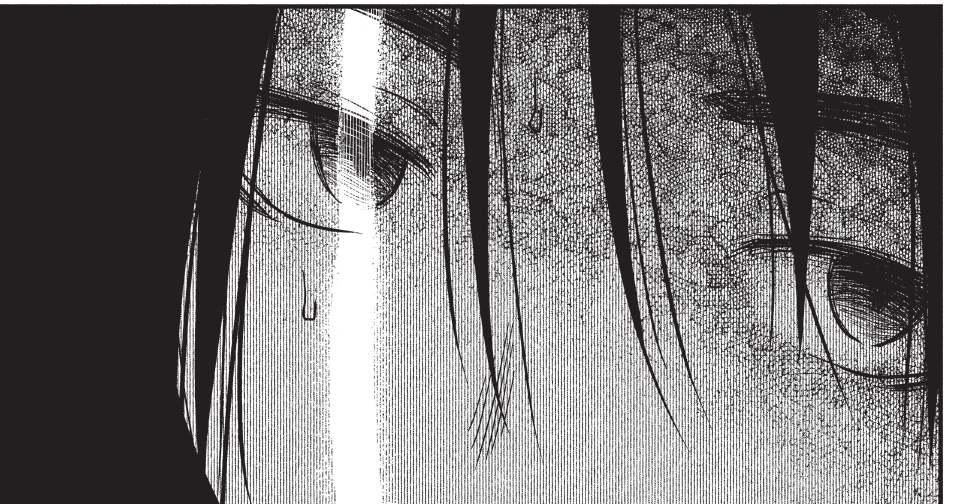
I was fast asleep
じわ…
SWEAT
for four full hours ...!!
In such a situation ...
... More impor-tantly,
it's this late at night, and yet...
there's no sign that her parents have come home...!!!
くる
TURN
...
すう…
SFF
What should I do ...?
...
すう…
SSK…
はぁー…
HAAH…
One night ...

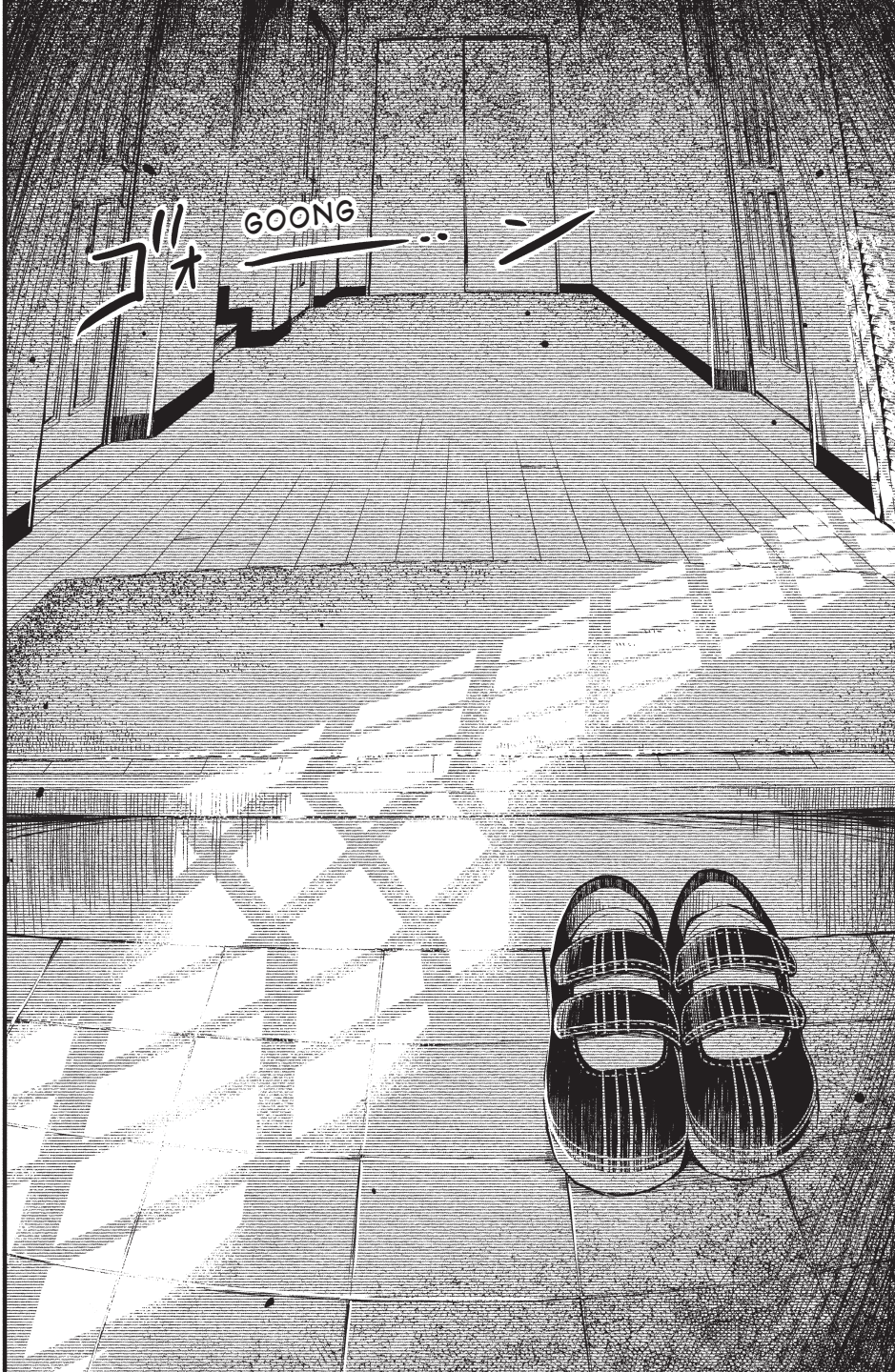




One night

—

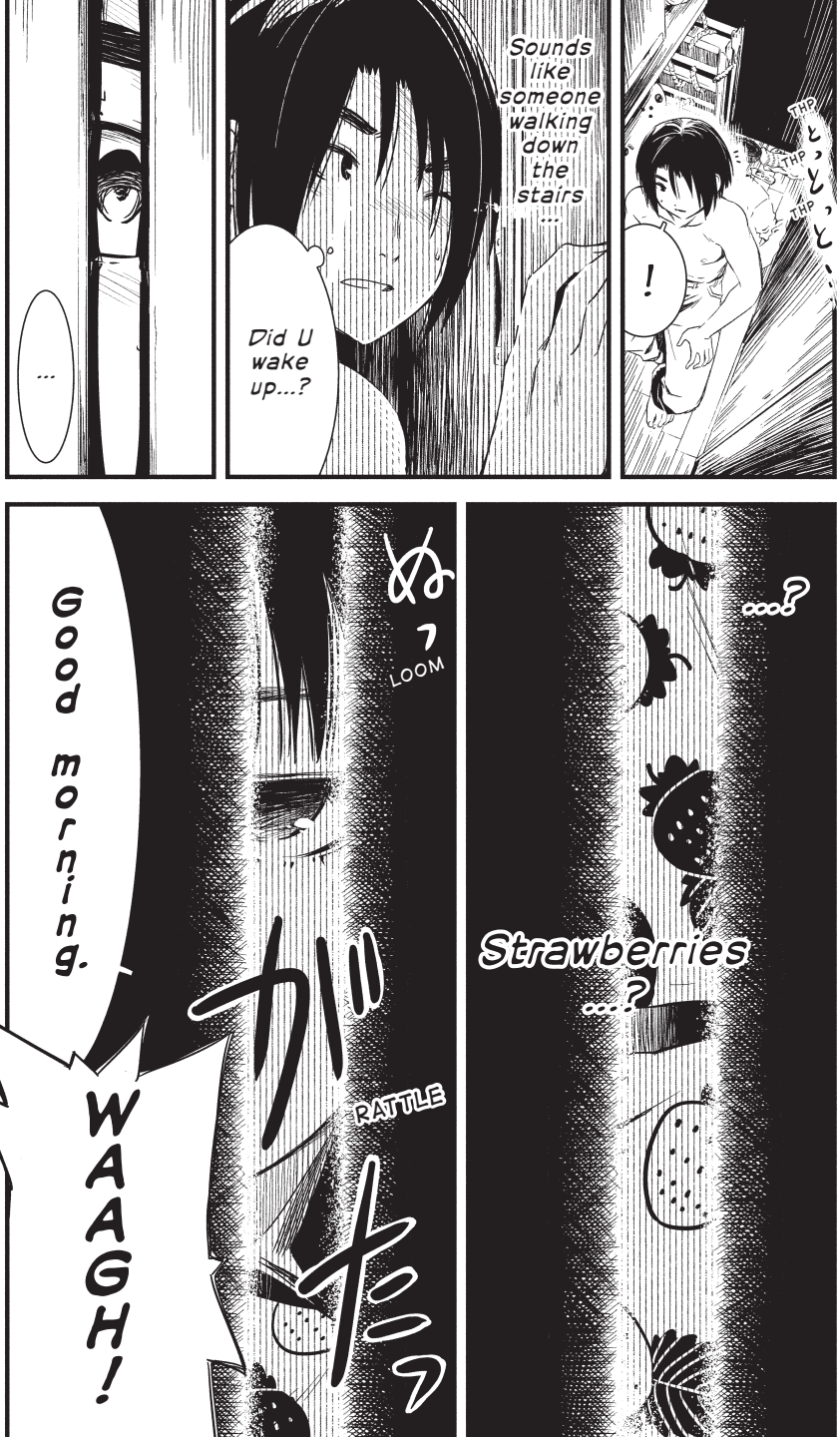

ゴォーーーン
GOONG
GOONG
ゴーーン


GOONG

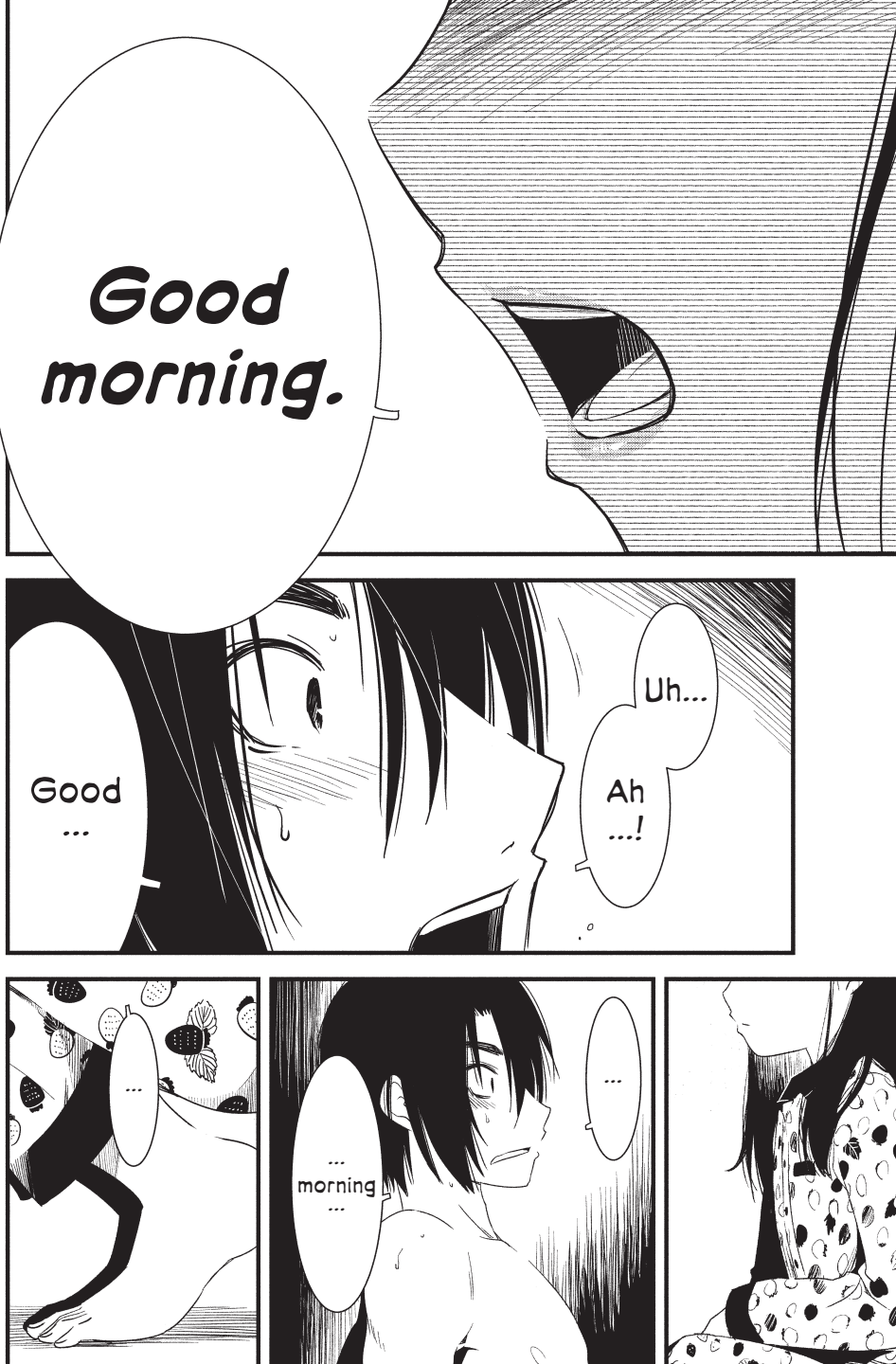
Could this girl be living in this house all by herself?

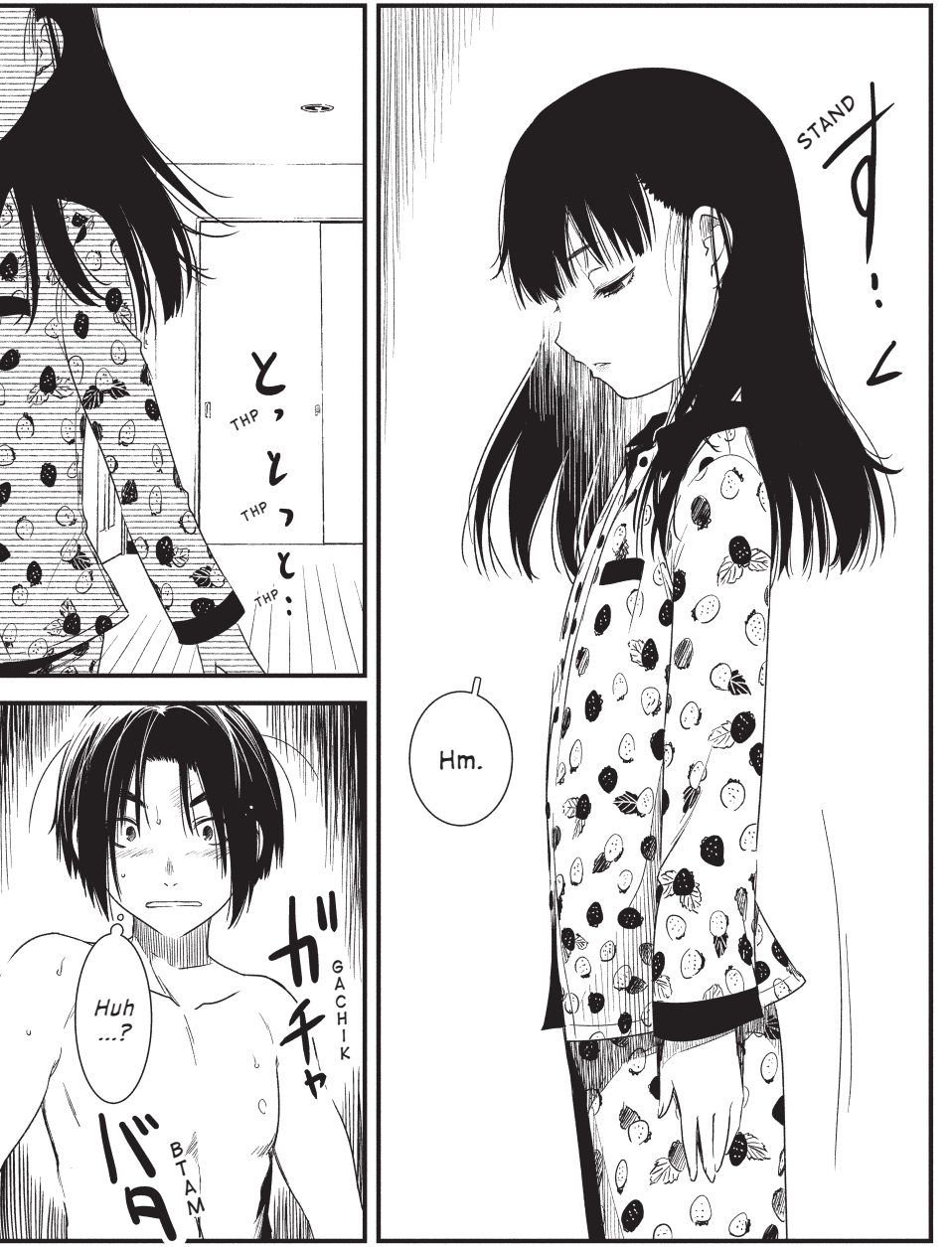
DUN
The fact that her parents weren't around
was just too shocking for me to process.
DUN
DUN
It was a bizarre thought.
Completely unfounded, to boot.
DUN
DUN
no matter what,
SSSSK...
HAAH...
I couldn't stop my overactive imagination.
If anything, there was evidence against it everywhere.
But ...
DUN

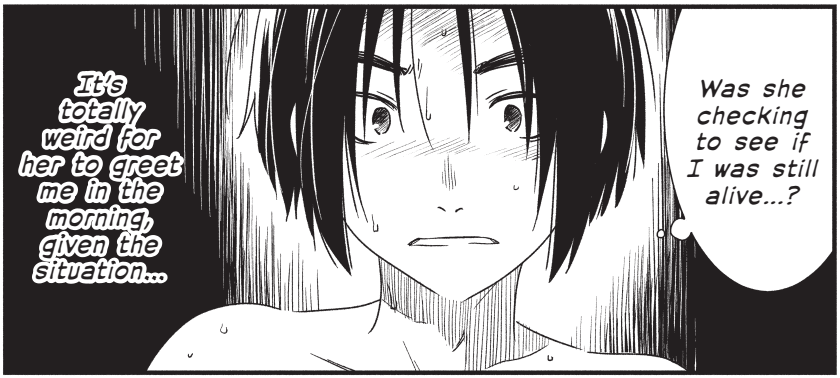
DUM
...
Just
...
today
...
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
GLANCE
チラ…
...
BADUM
BADUM
I'll give up on what looks like an easy solution.
If her parents don't come home by the end of the day, I'll end it.
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM


THP
とっとっとっ
THP
THP
!
Sounds like someone walking down the stairs...
Did U wake up...?
...
...?
Strawberries ...?
ぬっ
LOOM
Good morning.
RATTLE
WAAGH!

Good morning.
…
…


Good morning.
Uh...
Ah ...!
Good ...
...
...
... morning ...

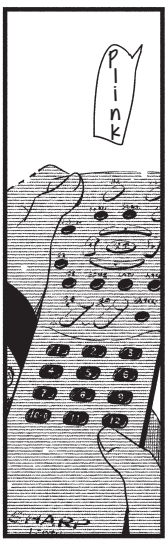

STAND
す…ン
Hm.
とっとっと…
THP
THP
THP
ガチャ
GACHIK
Huh ...?
バタン
BTAM


It's totally weird for her to greet me in the morning, given the situation...
Was she checking to see if I was still alive...?

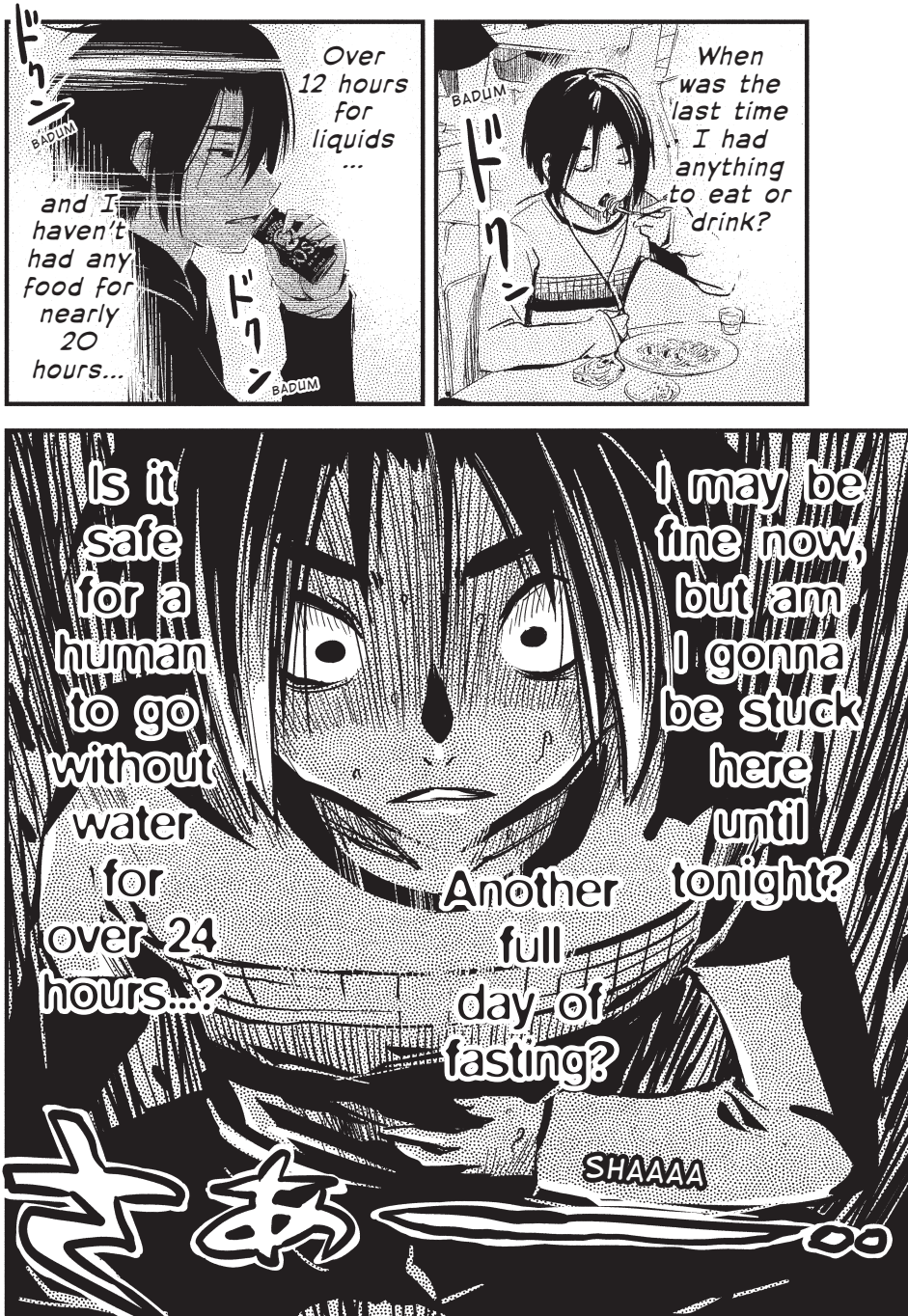
Why ...?
Her priorities are constantly mixed up...
No, it's not just her greetings ...

Is she eating breakfast in the living room alone while watching TV?
I didn't expect that ...

Is that the TV?


Plink

はた
THMP
...
Break-fast?
No... I guess that's how any kid would act when their parents aren't around to keep an eye on them...
I wouldn't expect that of her, considering how strangely good her manners seem...
Nothing ...
to drink, either ...
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM
Speaking of food...
I haven't had anything to eat since yesterday...
ドクン
BADUM
... Ah.
ドクン
BADUM


When was the last time I had anything to eat or drink?
BADUM
ドクン
Over 12 hours for liquids ...
and I haven't had any food for nearly 20 hours...
ドクン
BADUM
ドクン
BADUM
I may be fine now, but am I gonna be stuck here until tonight?
Another full day of fasting?
Is it safe for a human to go without water for over 24 hours...?
SHAAAA
さあー

They say you sweat several cups of water just sleeping at night...
Couldn't it be easier to become dehydrated than you might think...?
THP
THP
THP
Ah...
Hey...
Hold on...!
THP
THP...
BANG
BANG
BADUM
BADUM
I was so careless...
...I knew it.
BADUM
I should call for help...
No... No...
BADUM

THP
とっとっと…
THP
THP
とっ
Hey... U!!
ドン
BANG
ドン
BANG
Listen ...
Won't you listen to me, please ...?!
...
...Did she stop?
Ah...!
Uhm ... Uhh ...
...ow.
Huh?

I'll be going now.

2014.11

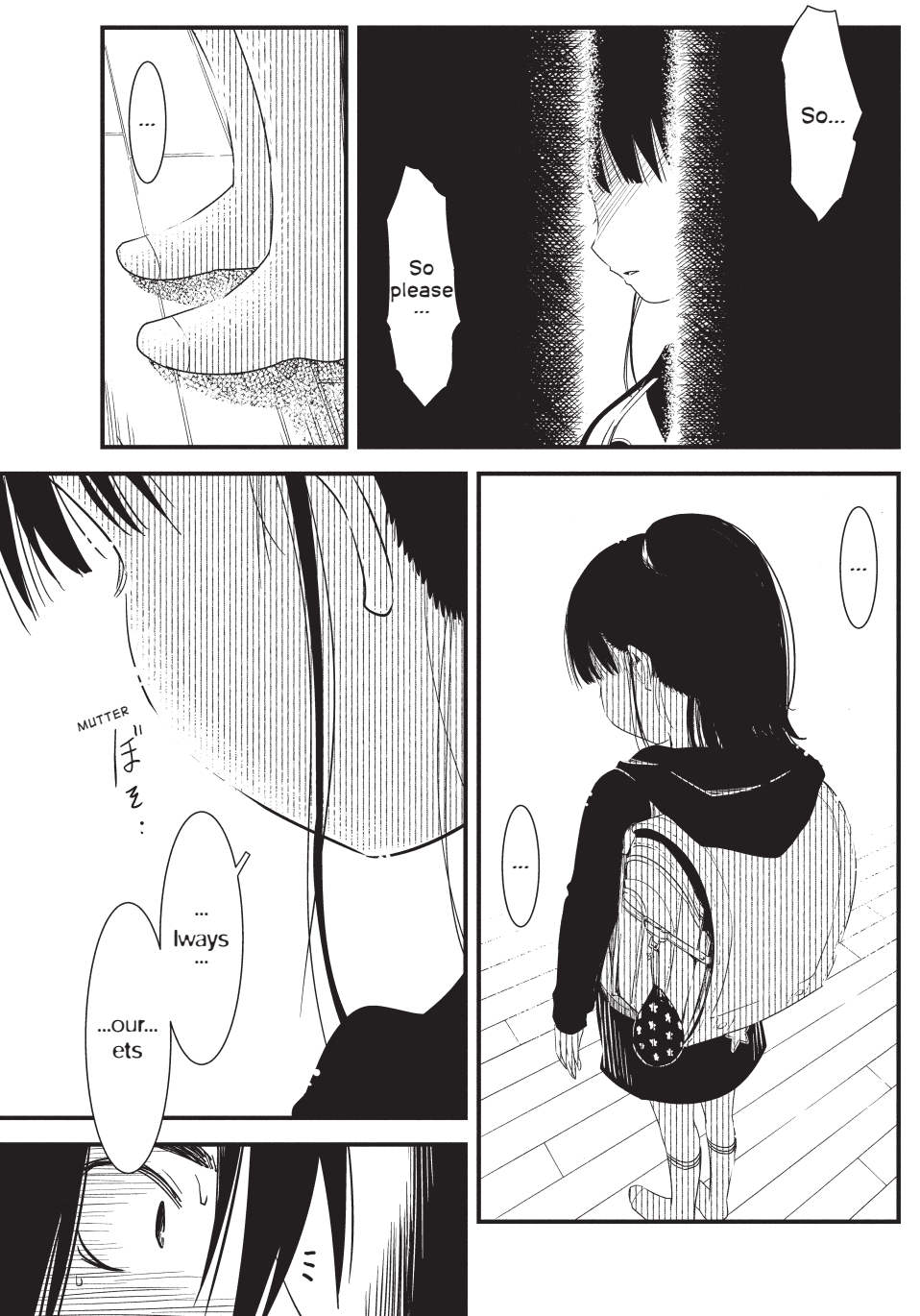
I'll be
going now.

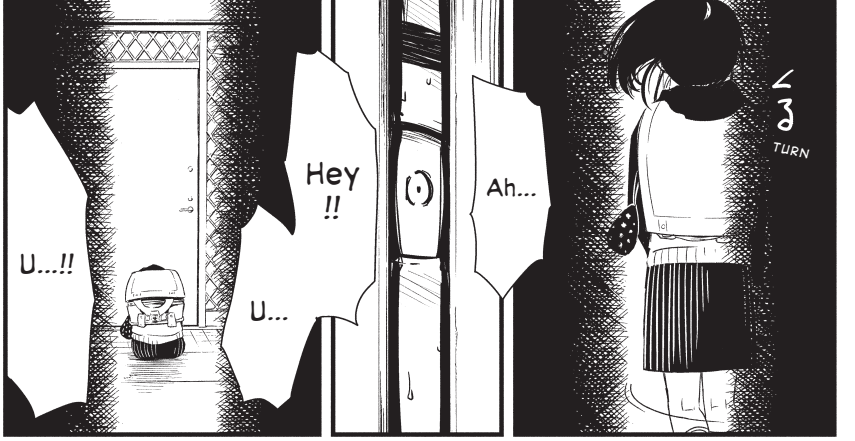
DUN
Wh...
Huh...?!
I'll be
going now.
You do remember
that you have someone locked up in your house, right?!

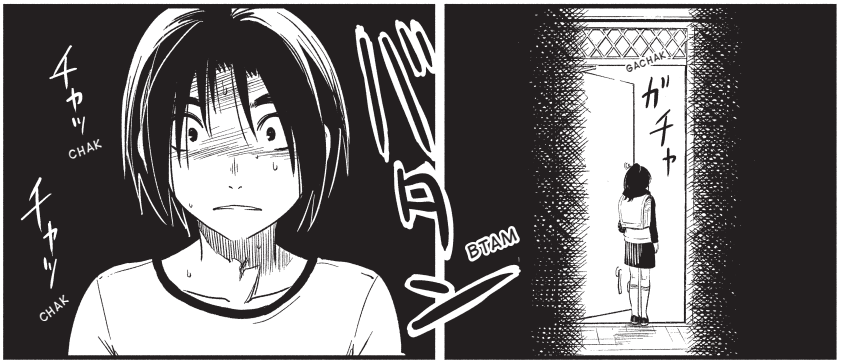
So why are you going to school?
No! No you aren't!
You'll be "going now"?
You can't ...
Don't go anywhere ...!!
DUN
DUN
DUN
DUN
DUN
DUN
DUN
DUN

I don't understand ...!!
STARE...
How is she able to go to school in such a situation ...?

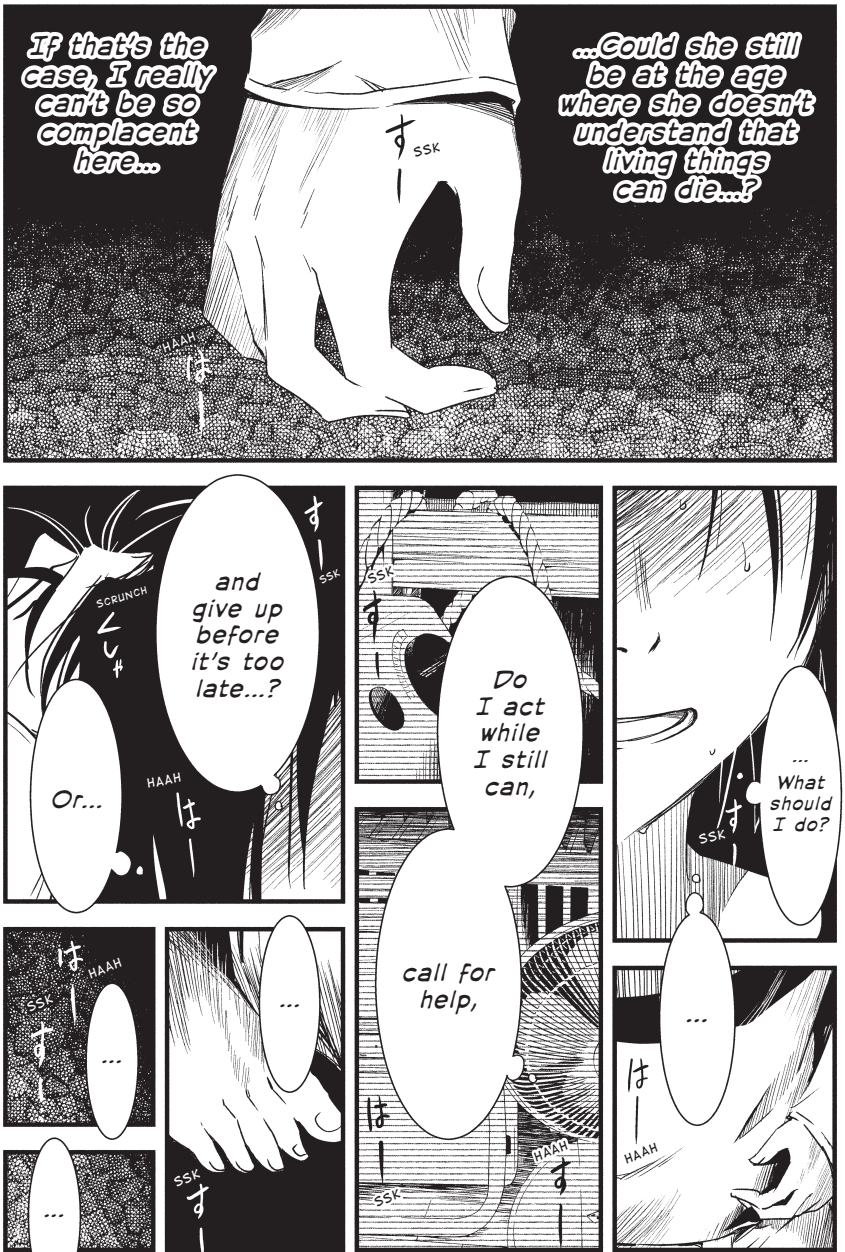
Wait ...
Wait !
I'm hungry right now...!
Please ...
Do you have something to eat ?!
Anything, please...!


So...
So please ...
...
...
...
MUTTER
ぼそ：
... lways ...
...our... ets

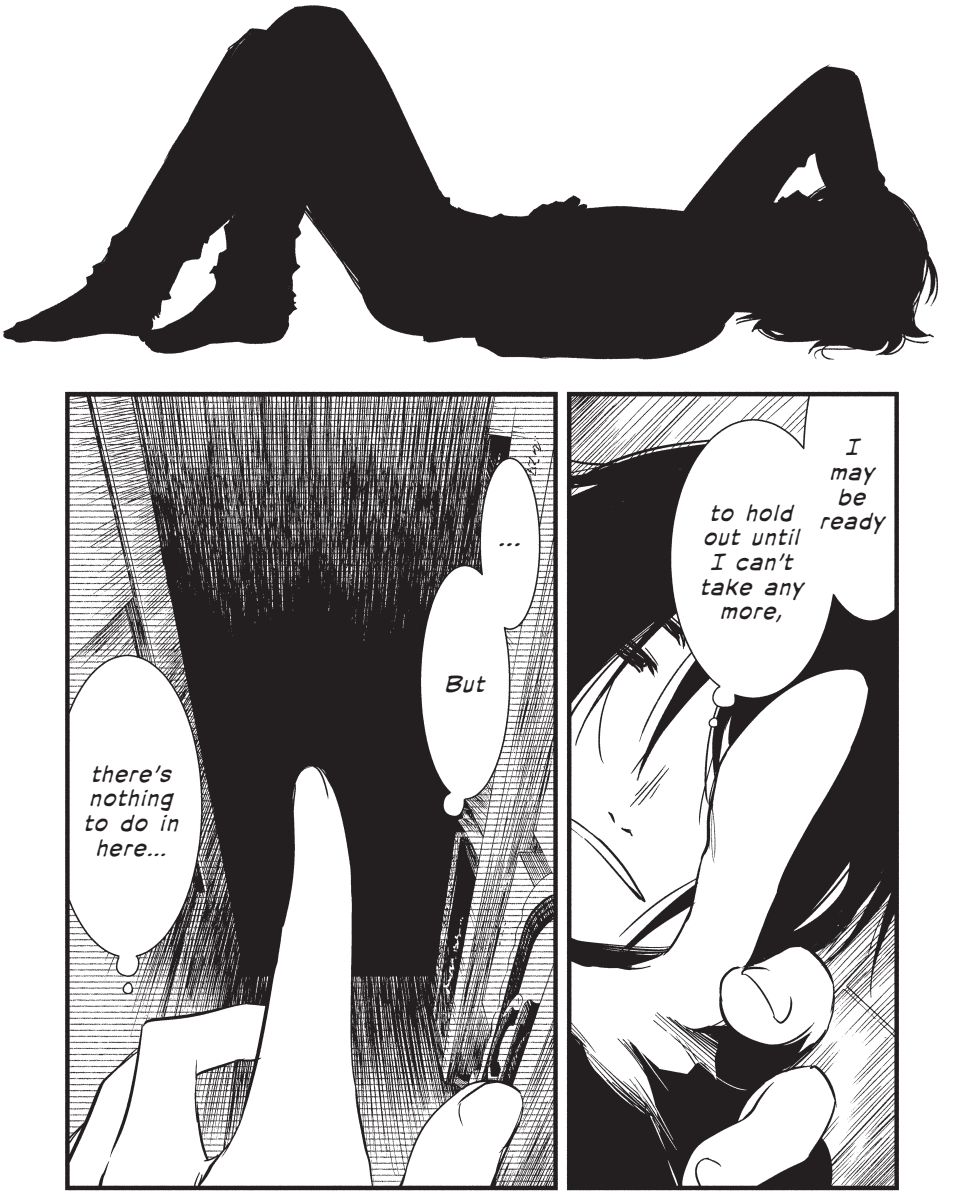

TURN
Ah...
Hey !!
U...
U...!!

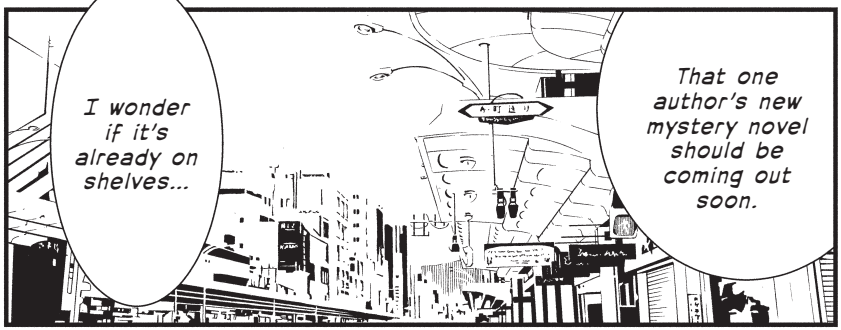

GACHAK
ガチャ
BTAM
チャッ CHAK
チャッ CHAK

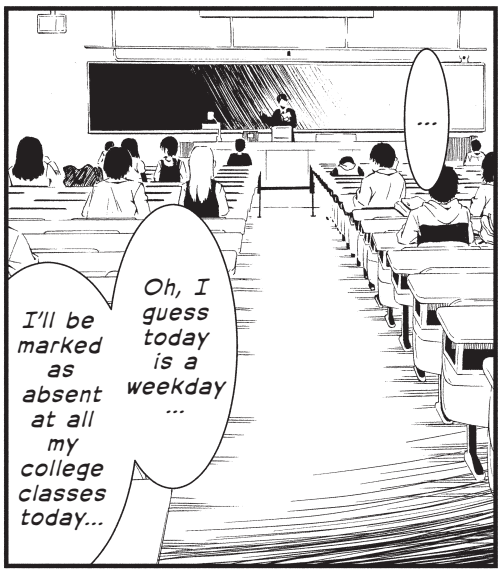
...
She ...
actually left...


If that's the case, I really can't be so complacent here...
...Could she still be at the age where she doesn't understand that living things can die...?
すー SSK
はー HAAH
and give up before it's too late...?
すー SSK
SCRUNCH
くしゃ
Or...
はー HAAH
すー SSK
Do I act while I still can,
call for help,
はー HAAH
すー SSK
... What should I do?
すー SSK
...
はー HAAH
...
はー HAAH
すー SSK
...
...
すー SSK

...
After deliberating,
I still decided to hold out until I'd reached my limit.
Thinking
was starting to tire me out.
In a way, I may have only been pretending to think about the issue while in fact throwing it aside.
Yes.

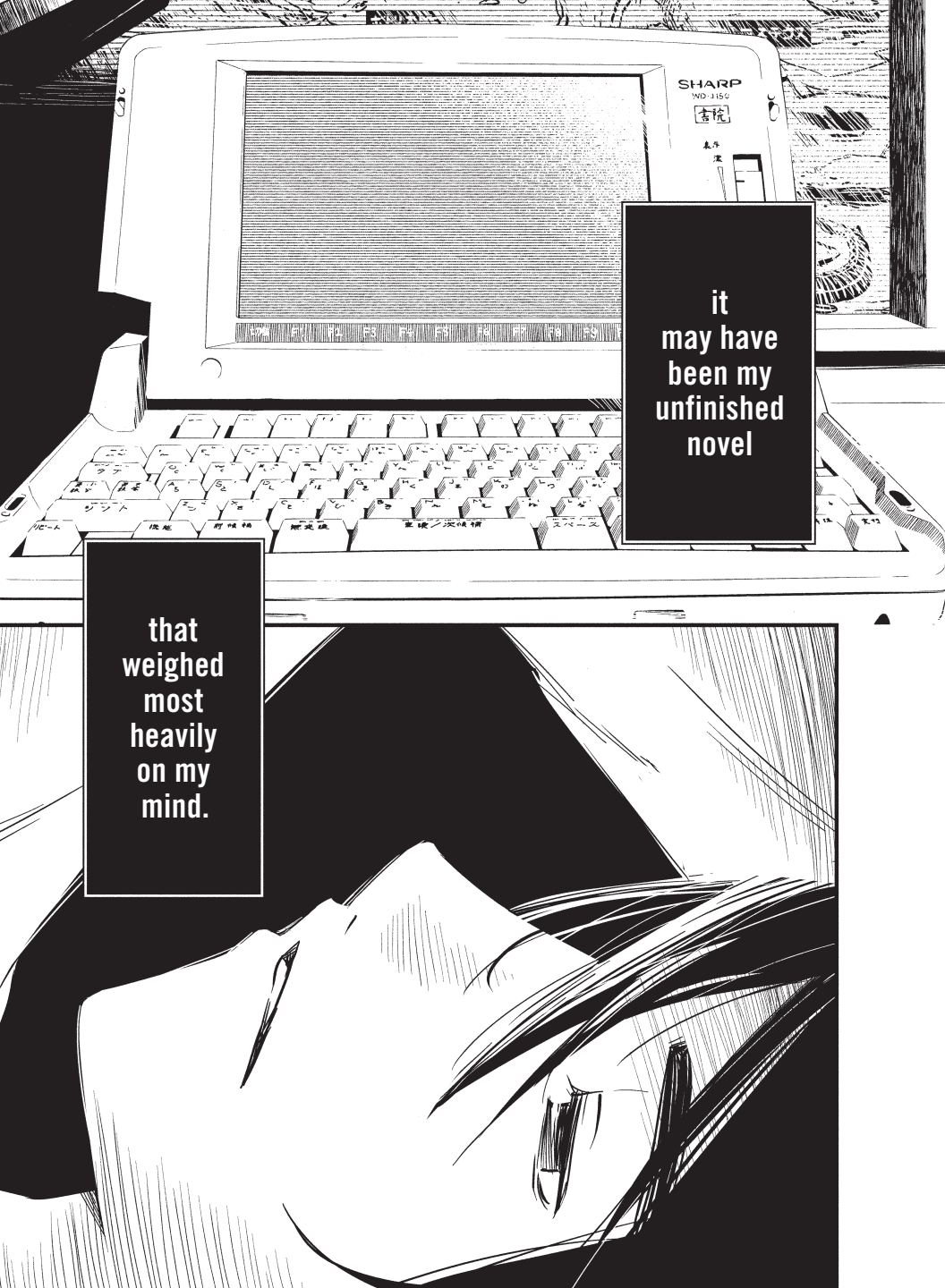

I may be ready
to hold out until I can't take any more,
...
But
there's nothing to do in here...

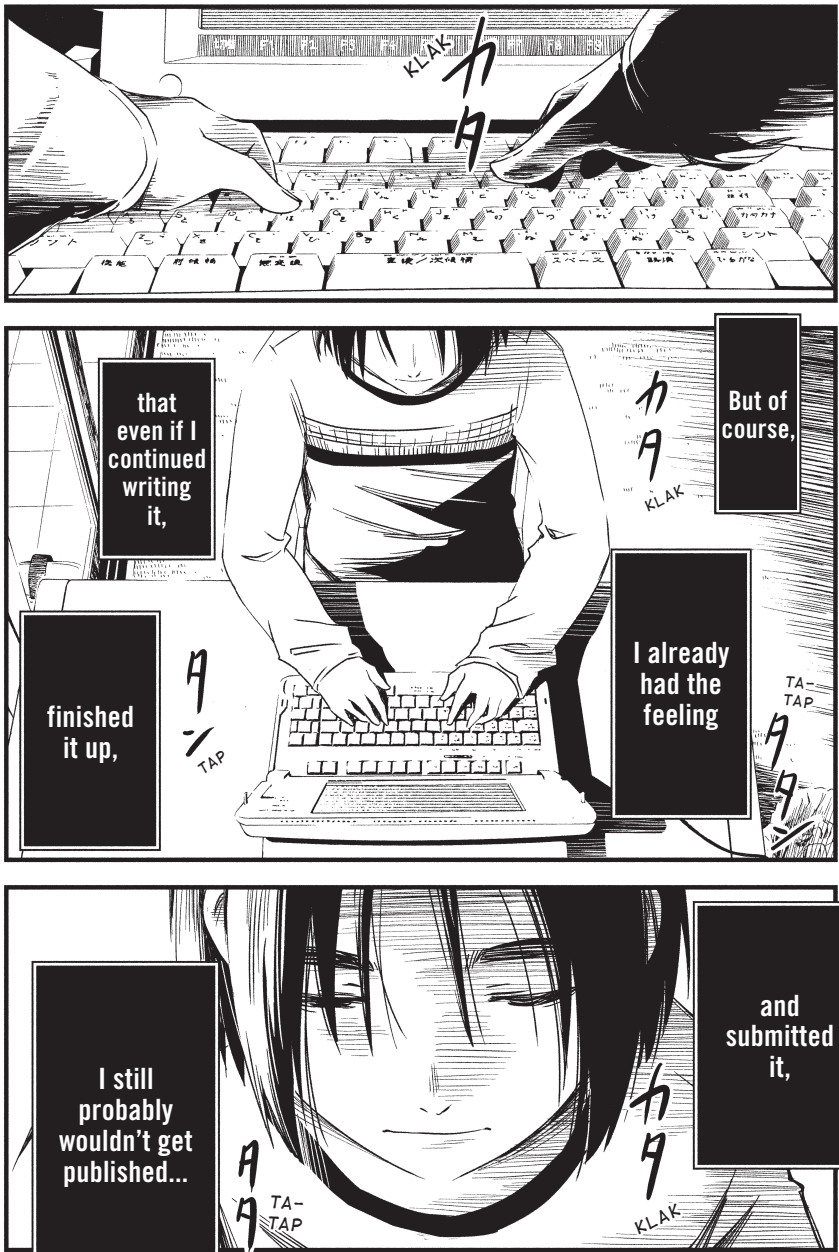

I wonder if it's already on shelves...
That one author's new mystery novel should be coming out soon.

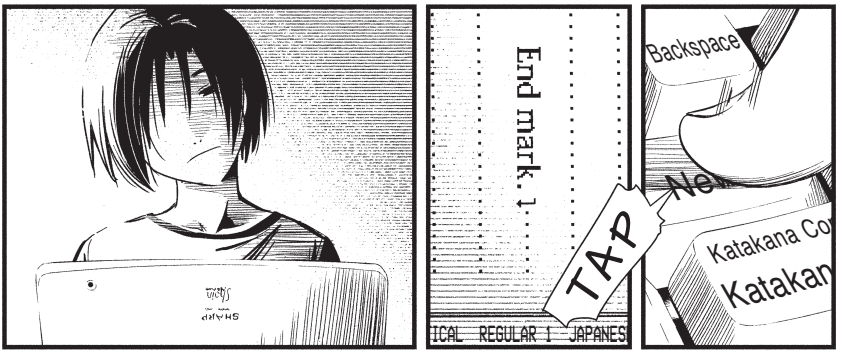

...
Oh, I guess today is a weekday ...
I'll be marked as absent at all my college classes today...

So this is what it's like to be isolated from humanity...
But what good is there in acting like some kind of hermit ...?

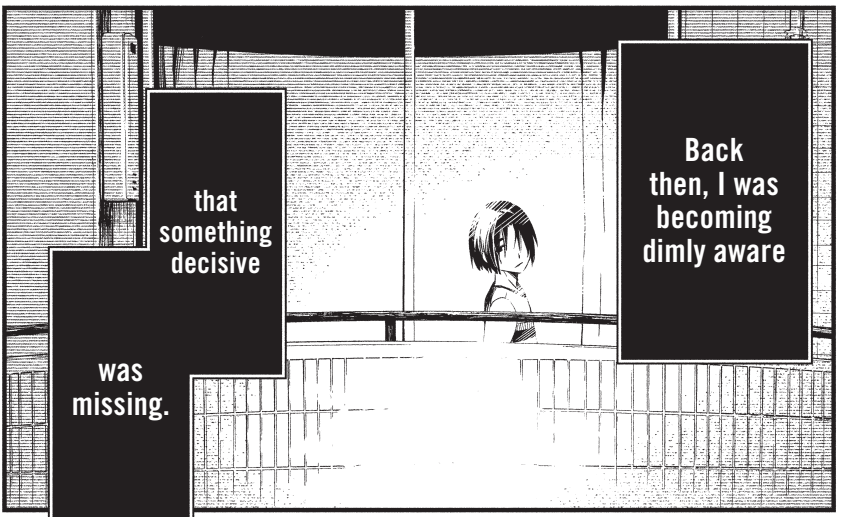
And despite all I said,
I honestly don't even know why I'm going there, anyway...
... But I don't care about school ...

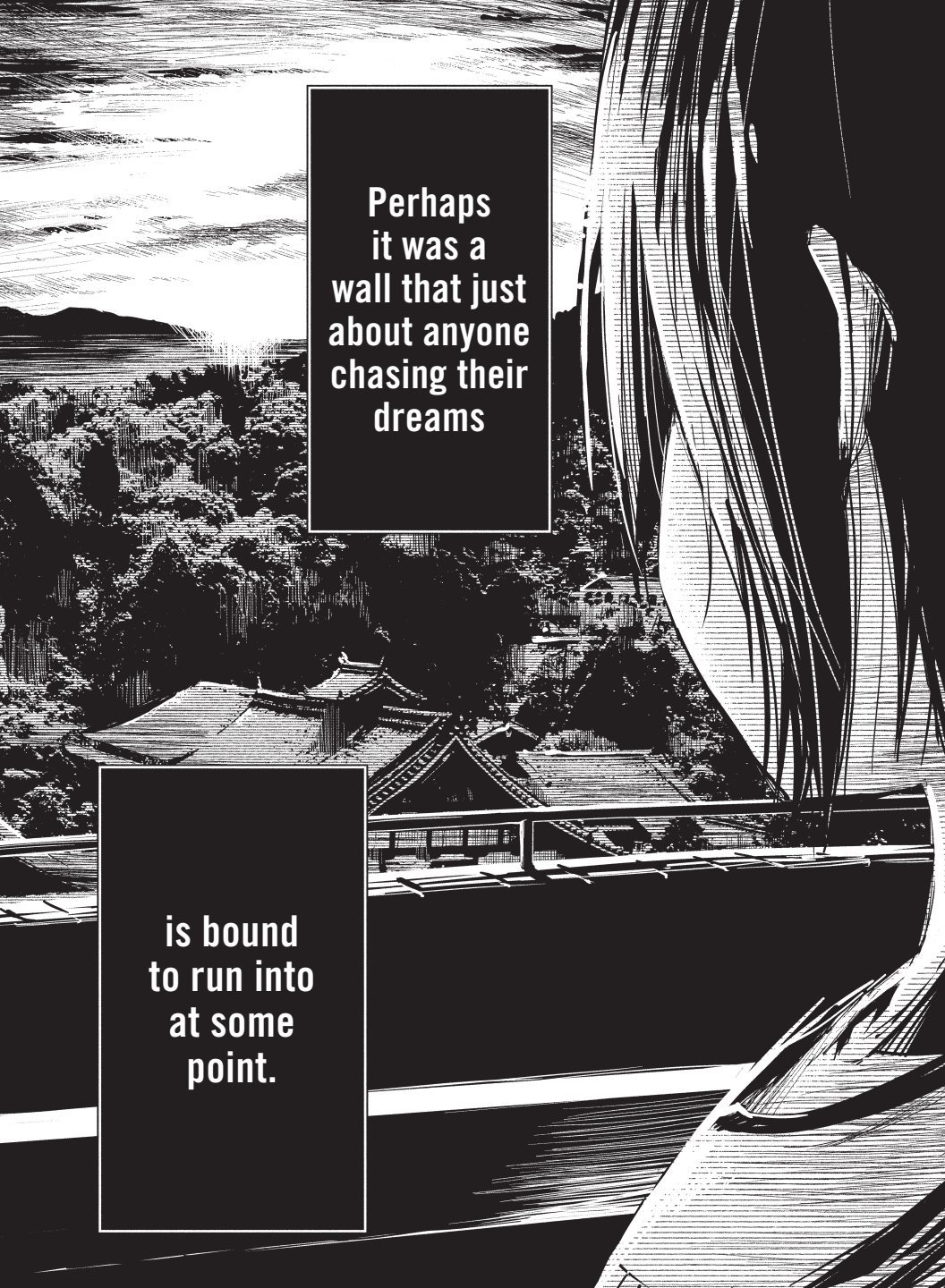

SHARP
WD-J150
it may have been my unfinished novel
that weighed most heavily on my mind.

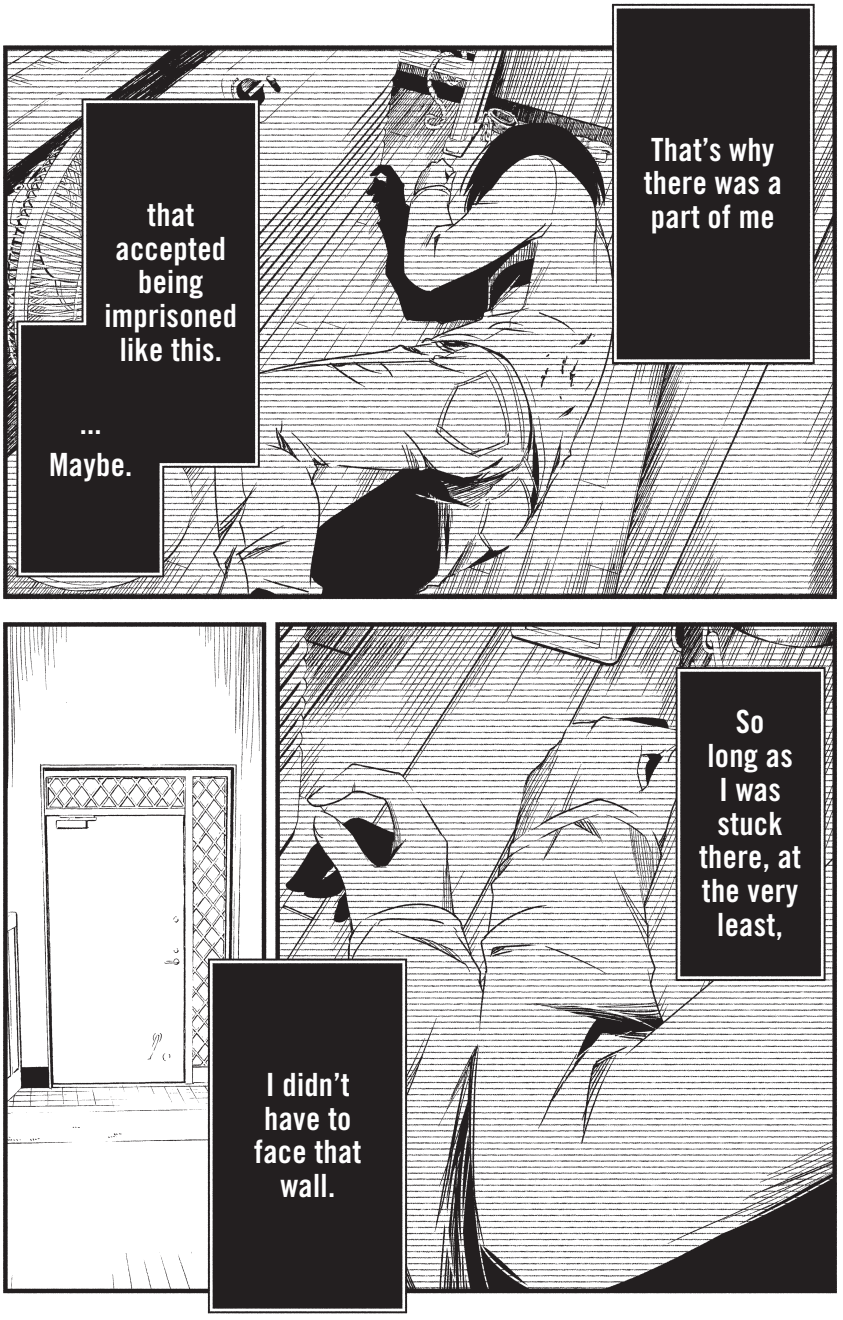

KLAK
カタ
But of course,
that even I continued writing it,
KLAK
I already had the feeling
finished it up,
TAP
タン
TA-TAP
タタ
and submitted it,
I still probably wouldn't get published...
タタ
TA-TAP
タン
KLAK
カタ


End mark.
TAP
Backspace
Katakana
ICAL REGULAR I JAPANES

My novels lacked something.


Back then, I was becoming dimly aware
that something decisive
was missing.

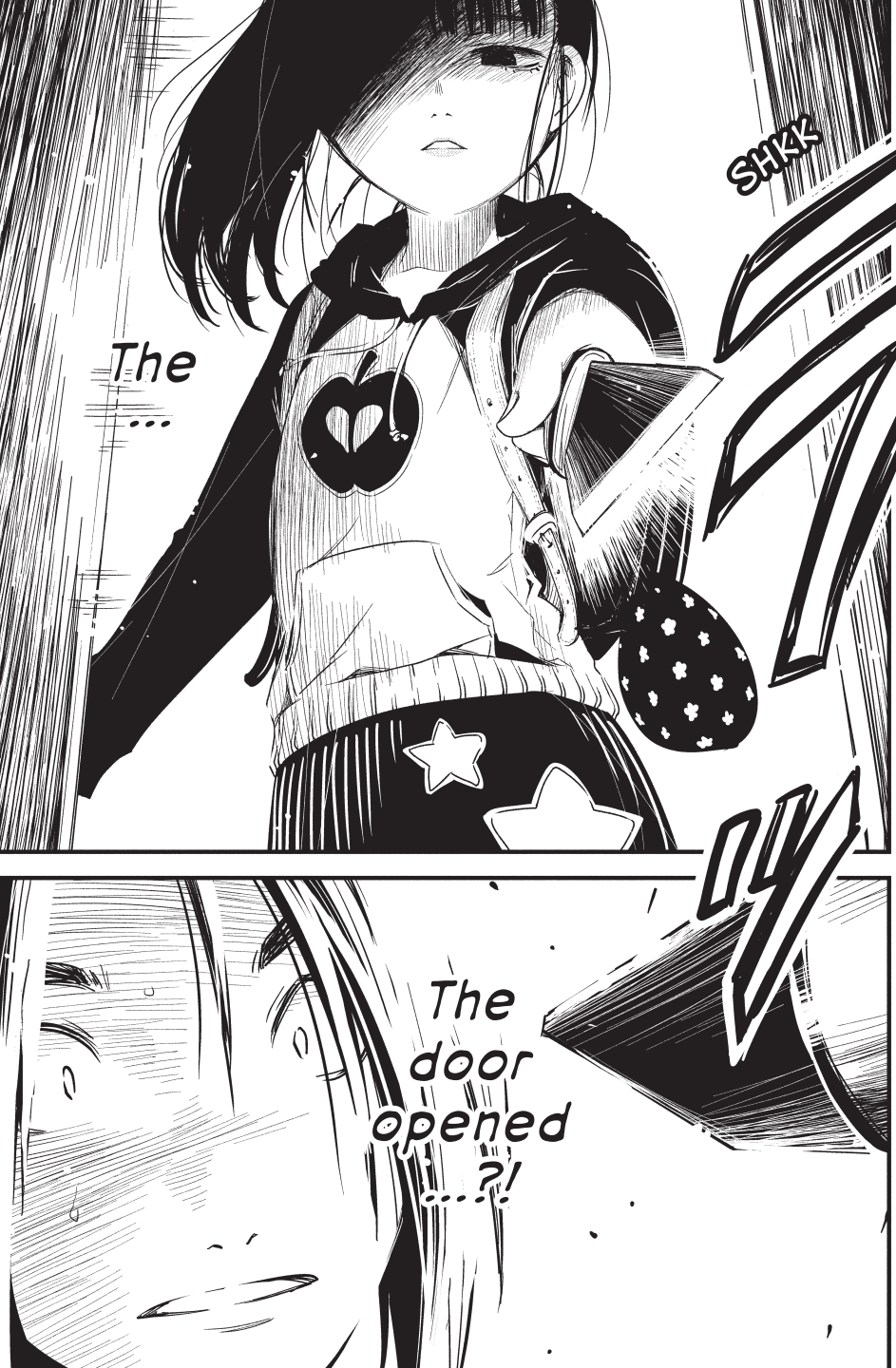

Perhaps it was a wall that just about anyone chasing their dreams
is bound to run into at some point.


That's why there was a part of me
that accepted being imprisoned like this.
...
Maybe.
So long as I was stuck there, at the very least,
I didn't have to face that wall.

WINK
kachak
kachak
CHAK
JUMP
...!!
Her parents...!!

I'm home.
BTAM
I ended up not doing anything... for half of a day...
Wel-come back ...
SWEAT
W...
SWEAT
SWEAT

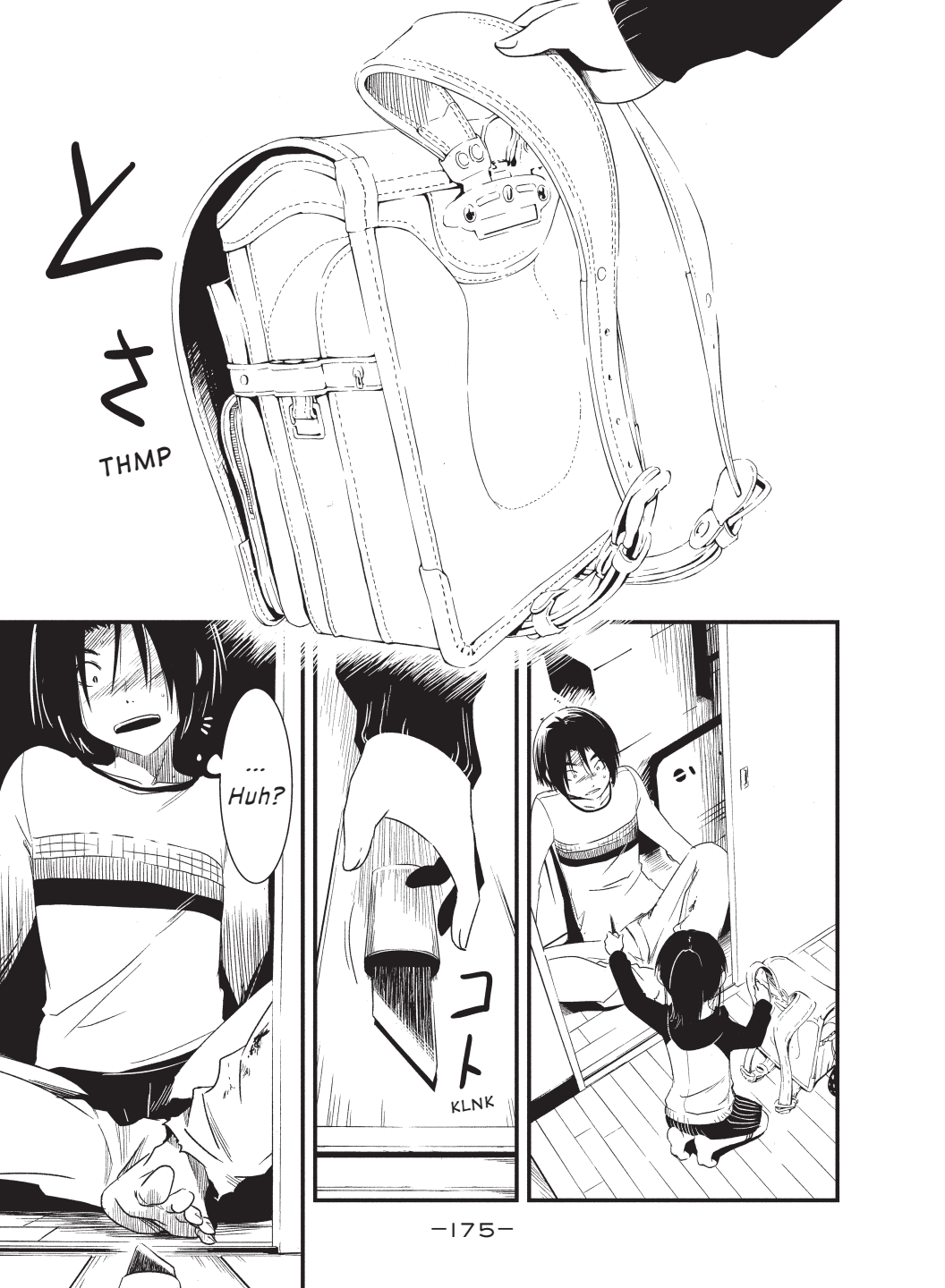
If I can't do anything unless I've been driven into a corner...
and I can't do anything once I'm actually in that corner, either...
ZHFF
ず
then when exactly
am I supposed to do anything, and just what can I do...?
ZZHHFF
ずず
kachak
カッ
SLAM

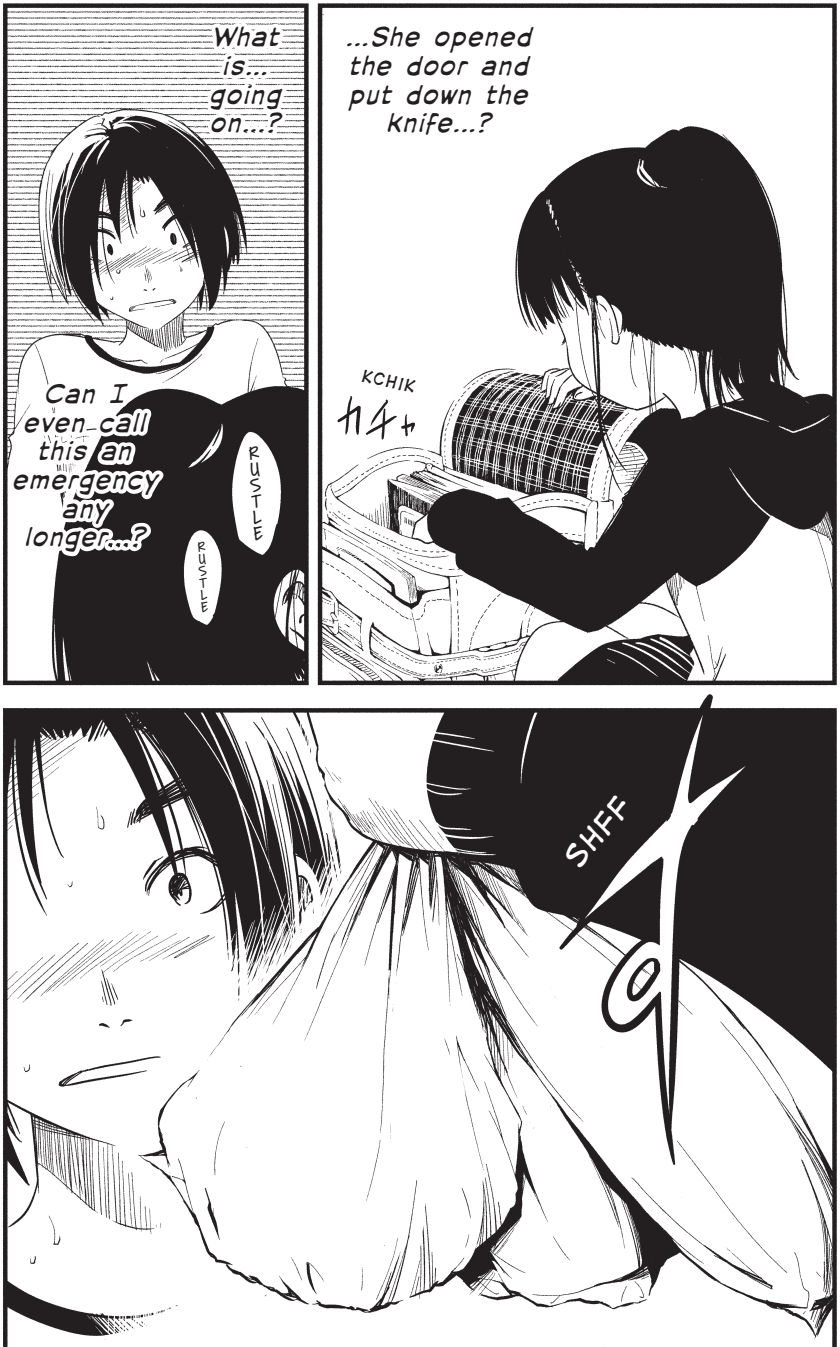

SHKK
The ...
The door opened ...?!

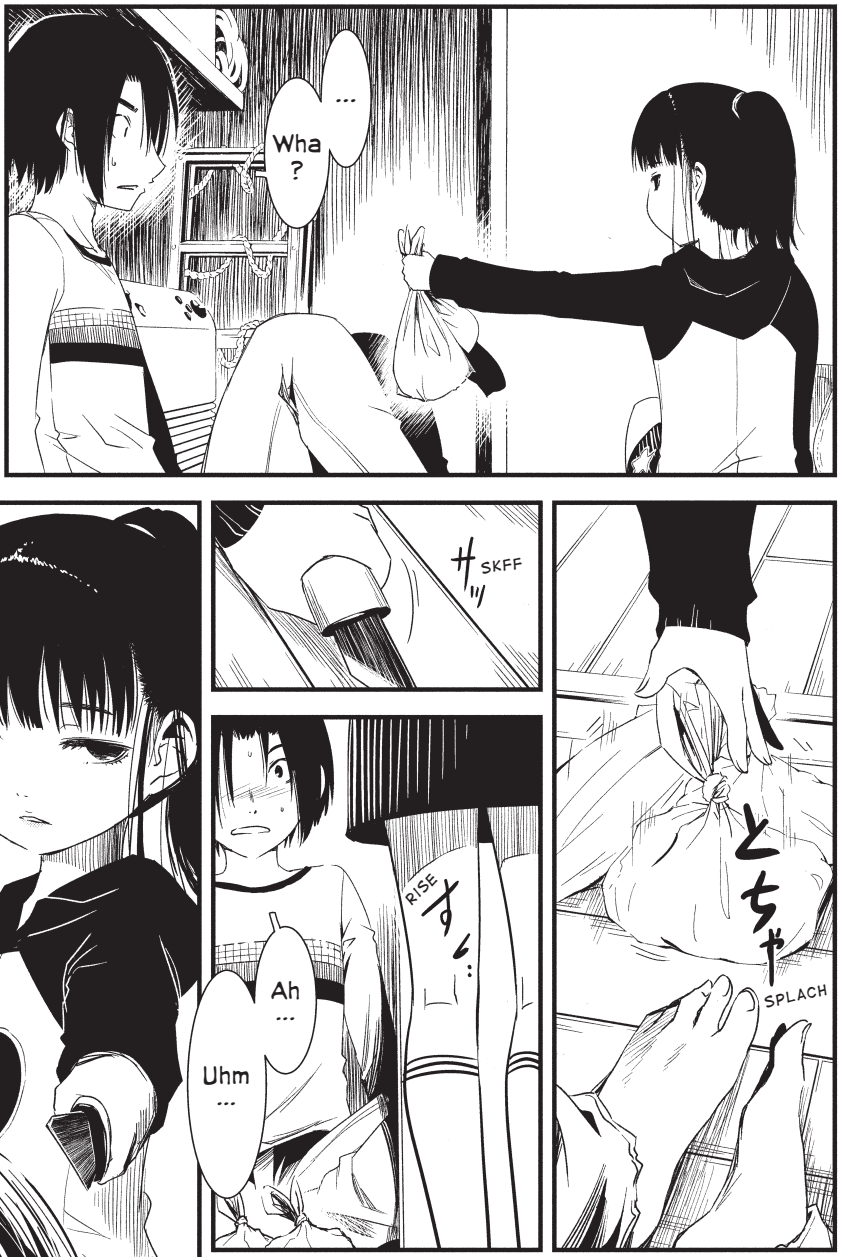
2015.6

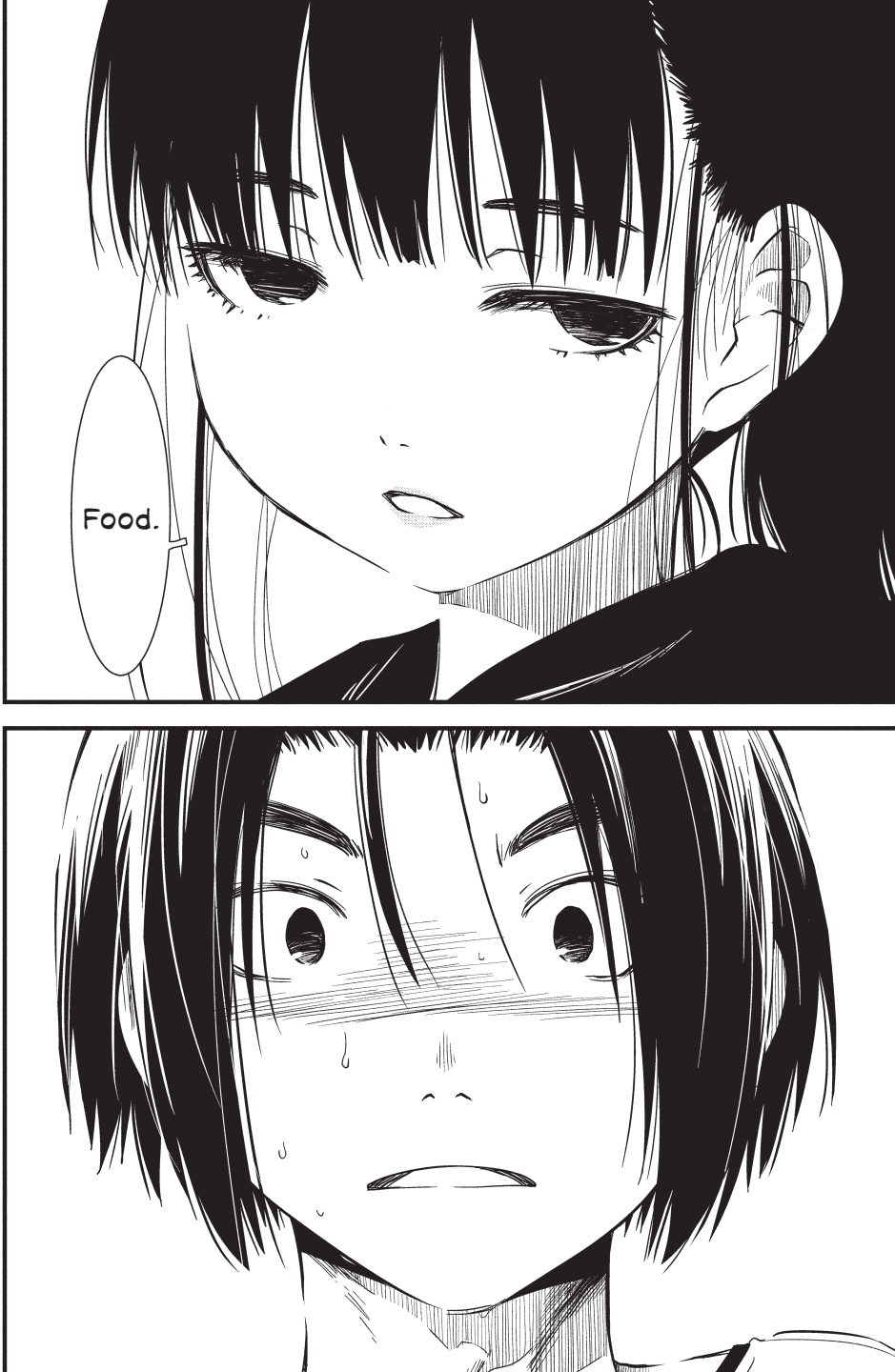
9

DUN
DUN
DUN
DUN
DUN
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE


トサ
THMP
コト
KLNK
...
Huh?

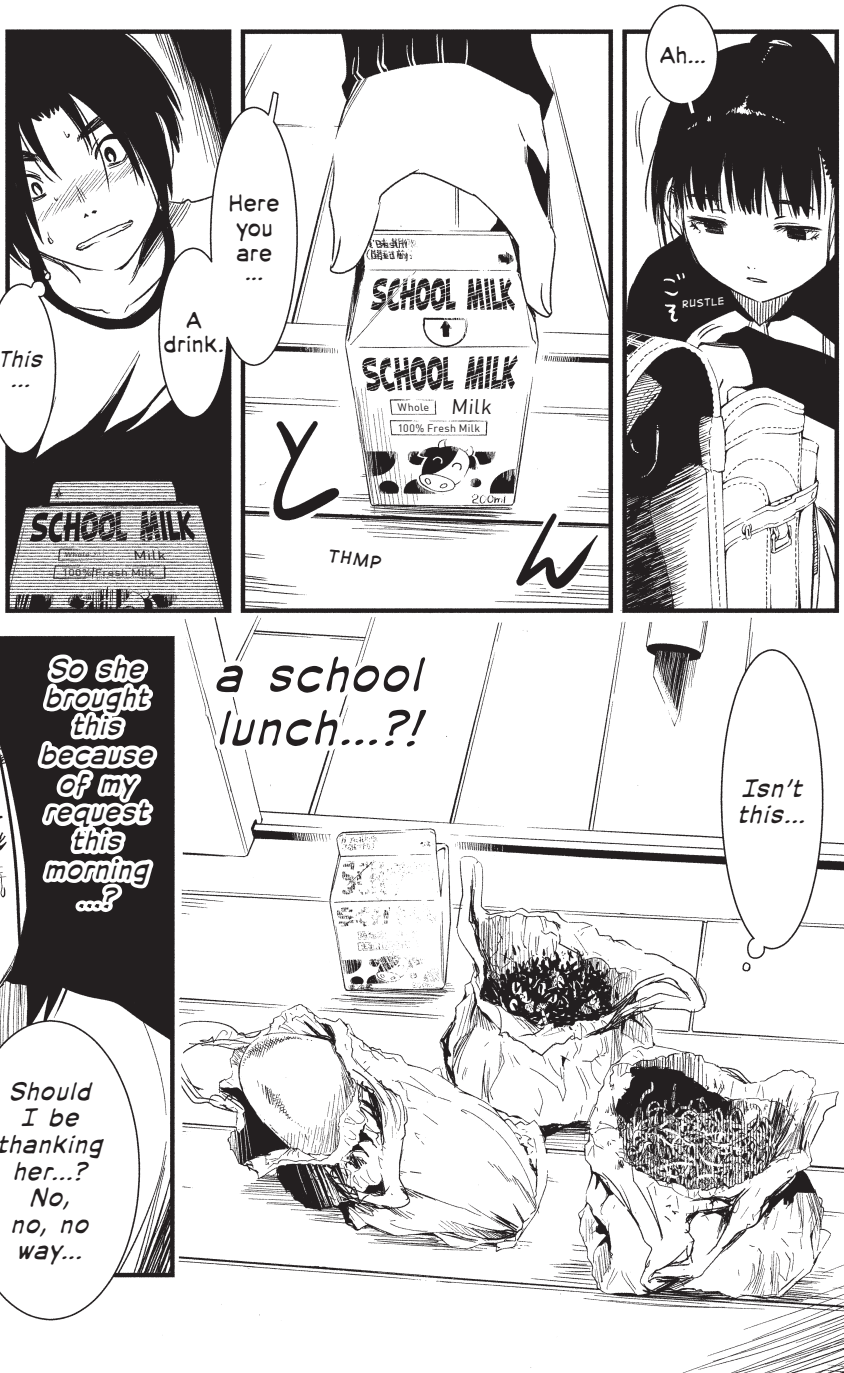

What is... going on...?
Can I even call this an emergency any longer...?
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
...She opened the door and put down the knife...?
KCHIK
カチャ
SHFF


...
Wha
?
SKFF
RISE
すー
Ah
...
Uhm
...
とちゃ
SPLACH


Food.

FSSH
わさ…
Food?
…
…
ゴ
DUN
ゴ
DUN
DUN
ゴ
ゴ
DUN
ゴ
DUN

put directly into a plastic bag...?
Fried noodles
DUN
DUN
DUN
DUN
A bread roll...?
SKRISH
ZHFF
Stewed sea-weed ...?
BAM
ZHFF


This ...
Here you are ...
A drink.
SCHOOL MILK
Whole Milk
100% Fresh Milk
SCHOOL MILK
Whole Milk
100% Fresh Milk
200ml
THMP
Ah...
RUSTLE
Isn't this...
a school lunch...?!
So she brought this because of my request this morning ...?
Should I be thanking her...? No, no, no way...

A school lunch dumped into some plastic bags...?
What am I, a stray dog...?!
わな
TREMBLE
わな
TREMBLE
Y-You can't be serious ...
The milk and the bread is one thing...
but I don't need your fried noodles and stewed seaweed ...!!
ぐぅうう
GROOOWWWLL
...
う
Then again ...
Ngk ...
Aah...

SWAKK

B...
Before ...
BEFORE
YOU
EAT

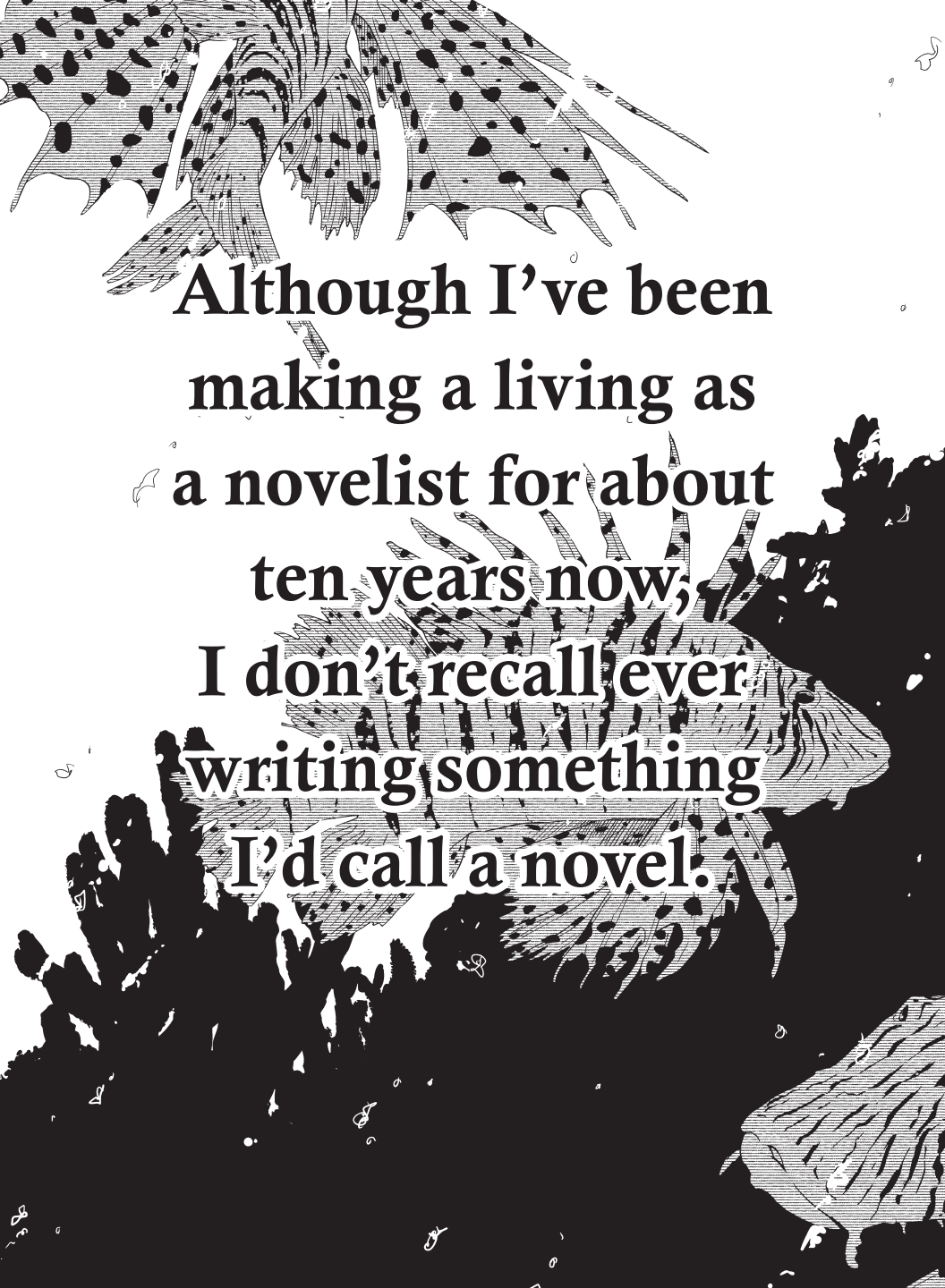
YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO GIVE THANKS!!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
This grade school kid, whose presence was so dim
I could barely tell if she was alive...

This incom-
prehensible,
indefinable
girl
at last
showed
signs of
life.
That
was the
moment
I got a
first-hand
taste
of U's
obsession
with
formalities.

トゥン
BADUM
...!
The first time U spoke to me,
she was so quiet I couldn't hear her.
It was simply:
She hadn't said anything frightening.

Nice to meet you.
... and that was all.
I was able to realize that now.
Continued in Volume 2

“My mom and dad are gone.”
A messy living room,
a dry sink, an empty refrigerator.
The young man escapes from the closet
and learns the truth about U as their
imperfect relationship begins to change.
Imperfect Girl 2
Coming This Winter


Although I've been making a living as a novelist for about ten years now, I don't recall ever writing something I'd call a novel.

Imperfect Girl 1

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